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THE WANDERING JEW

"'MY FRIEND,' SAID ADRIENNE TO HIM."

THE WANDERING JEW

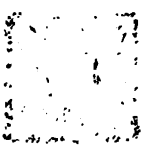
BY

EUGENE SUE

IN TWELVE VOLUMES

VOLUME III

Illustrated



NEW YORK
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1903

THE WANDERING JEW

BY

EUGENE SUE

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOLUME III

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KF 368

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THE BLACK PANTHER OF JAVA

THE WANDERING JEW.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHAMPS ELYSÉES.

About two hours had elapsed since the conversation between Rodin and Mlle. de Cardoville, when most of the promenaders, attracted to the Champs Elysées by the loveliness of a day of spring (the month of March was nearly at its close), stopped to admire a most elegant equipage.

The reader will imagine a *calèche* of lapis lazuli blue, with white wheels, picked out with blue, drawn by four splendid blood bay horses, with black manes and tails, the harness of chased silver, and mounted by two small postilions, exactly of the same size, with black velvet jacket, light blue cashmere waistcoat, with white collar, buckskin breeches, and top-boots; two tall and well-powdered footmen, also in light blue liveries, with white collars and cuffs, were seated in the rumble behind.

It is impossible to imagine anything in better taste, or an equipage more perfect; the horses high-bred, vigorous, and spirited, admirably driven by the postilions, stepped beautifully together, with elegant action, champing their bits covered with foam, and from time to time shaking their cockades of white and blue silk riband, in the centre of which bloomed a lovely rose.

A man on horseback, dressed in a very gentlemanly manner, following on the other side of the avenue, contemplated the equipage with a kind of satisfactory pride, as a thing of his own creation. This was M. de Bonneville, the esquire of Adrienne, as M. de Montbron called him, for this equipage was Mlle. de Cardoville's.

A change had taken place in the programme of this day of wonders.

M. de Montbron had not been able to give Djalma mademoiselle's billet, for the prince had that morning gone into the country with Marshal Simon, Faringhea said, but was expected back in the evening, when the letter would be handed to him on his arrival.

Completely reassured with respect to Djalma, and knowing that he would find a few lines, which, without informing him of all the happiness in store for him, would at least allow him to hope for it, Adrienne, complying with M. de Montbron's advice, had gone out for a ride in her carriage, in order to convince the world that she was quite determined, notwithstanding the prejudicial reports of Madame de Saint-Dizier, not to alter her resolution of living alone and having a house to herself.

Adrienne wore a small white *capote*, with a short blonde veil, which dropped around rosy cheeks and golden hair; her high gown of garnet velvet was almost hidden beneath a large green cashmere shawl.

The young Marquise de Morinval, who was a very handsome and elegant person, was seated on her right hand, whilst M. de Montbron occupied a seat in front of the two ladies.

Those who know the Parisian world, or rather that imperceptible fraction of the Parisian world which, for an hour or two, goes every sunny day to the Champs Elysées to see and be seen, will understand that the presence of Mlle. de Cardoville in this fashionable promenade must be an extraordinary event, something unheard of.

What is called the world could not believe its eyes,

when it saw a young girl of eighteen, possessed of millions (of francs), belonging to the highest ranks of the nobility, thus coming to confirm, as it were to the eyes of all, by showing herself in her carriage, that she actually did live entirely free and independent, contrary to all custom and all usual forms. This sort of emancipation seemed something monstrous, and they were the more surprised that the demeanour of the young lady, replete with grace and dignity, so completely falsified the calumnies put in circulation by Madame de Saint-Dizier and her friends, relative to the pretended madness of her niece.

Many exquisites, profiting by their acquaintance with the Marquise de Morinval or M. de Montbron, came one after the other to make their bow, and walked their horses for a few minutes beside the *caléche*, in order to have an opportunity of seeing, admiring, and perhaps hearing Mlle. de Cardoville, who crowned all their wishes by speaking with her usual charm and wit; and then surprise and enthusiasm reached their acme, and what had been at first accused as whim, and almost lunacy, became delightfully original, and it only depended on Mlle. de Cardoville herself to be from this time forward deemed the queen of elegance and fashion.

The young lady perfectly well understood the impression she produced, and was happy and proud when she thought of Djalma; and when she compared him with these men of fashion, she was still more joyous. And, in fact, these young men, the majority of whom had never quitted Paris, or the more adventurous of whom had been as far as Naples or Baden-Baden, seemed to

"Pale their ineffectual fires,"

when compared with Djalma, who, at his age, had so often victoriously commanded and fought in bloody wars, and whose reputation for courage and heroic generosity was quoted with admiration by travellers coming to Paris

from the remotest parts of India. And, moreover, the most exquisite dandies, with their small hats, their stiff cravats, and pinched-in riding coats, were not comparable with the Indian prince, whose graceful and manly beauty was the more heightened by the splendour of a costume at once so rich and so picturesque.

All, therefore, on this day was happiness, joy, and love for Adrienne; the sun, sinking in a sky of splendid serenity, inundated the promenade with its golden rays; the air was balmy, carriages were crossing in all directions, cavaliers dashing about on prancing thoroughbreds, whilst a light breeze agitated the scarfs of the ladies and the feathers in their bonnets, — all was noise, motion, light.

Adrienne, leaning back in her carriage, was amusing herself by seeing all this brilliant display of Parisian luxury pass beneath her eyes; but in the midst of this dazzling chaos she saw, "in her mind's eye," the melancholy and gentle features of Djalma, when something fell at her feet — she started!

It was a bunch of faded violets.

At the same moment she heard a child's voice, which said, as it followed the carriage:

"*Pour l'amour de Dieu*, good lady, one little sou!"

Adrienne looked around, and saw a poor little girl, pale and wan, with a sad but pleasing countenance, hardly covered by the miserable rags that clung around her, who stretched out her little hands, and raised her supplicating eyes.

Although the striking contrast of extreme misery in the very bosom of extreme luxury is so common that it is no longer remarkable, yet Adrienne was doubly affected; the recollection of La Mayeux at that moment, perchance a prey to the most fearful distress, came across her mind.

"Ah, at least," thought the young lady, "to-day must not be a day of entire happiness for myself alone."

Leaning a little out of the carriage, she said to the little girl:

"Have you any mother, my child?"

"No, madame, neither mother nor father."

"Who takes care of you?"

"No one, madame; they give me nosegays to sell, and I am obliged to take back pence, or else they beat me."

"Poor little thing!"

"One sou, good lady, one sou, *pour l'amour de Dieu*," said the child, still following the carriage, which was moving on at a foot's pace.

"My dear count," said Adrienne, addressing M. de Montbron, "this will not be the first time you have carried off a young lady, if you will lean over, hold out your hands, and lift the poor little girl nicely into the carriage; we will hide her directly between Madame de Morinval and myself, and leave the promenade without any one perceiving the daring robbery."

"What?" exclaimed the count, surprised, "would you really?"

"Yes, I beg of you."

"Really, what a folly!"

"Yesterday, perhaps, you might have called such a whim a folly, but to-day," and Adrienne laid emphasis on the word, and looked intelligently at M. de Montbron, "but to-day you ought to understand that it is almost a duty."

"Yes, I understand your good and noble heart," said the count, with an air of feeling, whilst Madame de Morinval, who was completely ignorant of Adrienne's love for Djalma, looked with as much surprise as curiosity at the count and the young girl.

M. de Montbron, leaning over the carriage door, stretched forth his two hands to the child, and said, "Little one, give me both your hands."

The child, though much astonished, obeyed mechanically, and held out her two little arms, and the count,

grasping her two wrists, very adroitly lifted her into the carriage, — the more easily, as it was very low, and, as we have said, moving on gently.

The child, more surprised than frightened, did not say a word. Adrienne and Madame de Morinval made room between them, and the little girl was speedily covered up and hidden beneath the ends of the two young ladies' shawls.

All this was executed so rapidly that but very few persons passing along observed the carrying off.

"Now, my dear count," said Adrienne, joyously, "let us retreat as rapidly as may be with our prey."

M. de Montbron rose half up from his seat, and said to the postilion, "Home!" and the four horses went into a rapid and even trot.

"It seems to me now as if this day of happiness is consecrated, and my luxury is excused," thought Adrienne. "Until I can discover my poor Mayeux, by causing from to-day every possible search, her place will not be unoccupied."

There are singular coincidences. At the moment when this kind thought of La Mayeux came into Adrienne's mind, a large body of people were collected in the cross-alleys; several passers-by paused, and then others hastened to swell the group.

"Look, uncle," said Madame de Morinval, "what a crowd there is there! What can it be? Pray stop the carriage, that we may inquire the cause of this crowd."

"My dear, I am very sorry your curiosity cannot be gratified," said the count, taking out his watch; "but it is nearly six o'clock, — the representation of the wild beasts will begin at eight o'clock, and we have only time to get home and dine. Don't you think so, my dear girl?" said he to Adrienne.

"Do you, Julie?" said Mlle. de Cardoville to the marquise.

"Certainly," replied the lady.

"I shall be the more obliged to you not to delay," added the count, "as after I have conducted you to the Porte St. Martin, I shall be obliged to return to my club for half an hour, to vote for Lord Campbell, whom I have proposed."

"Then Adrienne and I shall be alone at the theatre, uncle?"

"Why, I suppose your husband will be with you."

"To be sure, uncle; but do not on that account leave us longer than you can help."

"Rely on that, for I am at least as curious as you are to see this famous Morok, the incomparable tamer of wild beasts."

Some minutes afterwards, Mlle. de Cardoville's carriage, having left the Champs Elysées carrying off the little girl, went towards the Rue d'Anjou. At the moment when this brilliant equipage disappeared, the assemblage which we have mentioned had increased, and a large crowd was now gathered around one of the large trees in the Champs Elysées, and from time to time exclamations of pity and commiseration were heard from amongst them. A lounger, coming up to a young man who was standing outside this crowd, said to him:

"What is the matter there?"

"Oh, a poor creature,—a young humpbacked girl, who has fainted from exhaustion."

"A humpbacked girl—what a fuss! There are enough humpbacked people everywhere," said the inquirer, with a coarse grin.

"Humpbacked or not, if she is dying of hunger," replied the young man, hardly able to repress his indignation, "it is not the less lamentable, and I do not see anything to laugh at, sir!"

"*Dying* of hunger—bah!" said the lounger, shrugging his shoulders. "There are none but the skulkers, who won't work, who die of hunger—and why shouldn't they?"

"And I will bet, sir, that there is a death of which you will never die," exclaimed the young man, indignant at the brutality of the man.

"What do you mean?" inquired the lounger, with hauteur.

"I mean to say, sir, that your heart will never choke you."

"Sir!" cried the lounger, in an angry tone.

"Well, what, sir?" retorted the young man, looking the speaker full in the face.

"Nothing!" said the lounger; and, turning quickly on his heels, he went grumbling towards his cabriolet, with an orange body, on which was an enormous coat of arms, having the crest of a baron. A servant, absurdly laced with gold and green, and having an enormous aiguilette, which bobbed against the calves of his legs, was standing by the horse, and did not perceive his master.

"Why, you stupid fellow, are you yawning at the rooks?" said his master, poking him with the end of his cane.

The servant turned around in confusion.

"Monsieur, I was —"

"Will you never say, 'Monsieur le Baron,' you ass?" exclaimed the angry lounger. "Open the cab, can't you?"

The lounger was M. Tripeaud, the manufacturing baron, hyena, and stock-jobber. The poor humpbacked creature was, indeed, La Mayeux, who had dropped down, exhausted by misery and want, as she was on her way to Mlle. de Cardoville's.

The unhappy girl had found courage to brave the shame and cruel jesting which she expected to endure on returning to the house whence she had voluntarily exiled herself; but now it was not for herself she thought, but of her sister Céphyse, the Queen-Bacchanal, who had returned to Paris on the previous evening, and

whom La Mayeux hoped, by Adrienne's favour, to snatch from a frightful destiny.

Two hours after those different scenes, an immense crowd was collected around the Porte St. Martin, in order to be present at the exercises of Morok, who was to imitate a combat with the famous black panther of Java, called La Mort.

Adrienne, M. and Madame de Morinval alighted from their carriage at the entrance to the theatre, where they were to be joined by the Comte de Montbron, whom they had dropped at his club on their way thither.

CHAPTER II.

BEHIND THE CURTAIN.

THE immense theatre of the Porte St. Martin was crowded by an impatient audience.

All Paris, as M. de Montbron had said to Mlle. de Cardoville, was hurrying, with intense and increasing curiosity, to the representations of Morok. It is useless to say that the tamer of beasts had completely abandoned his small trade in pious toys, in which he had dealt so profitably during his sojourn at the hostelry of the White Falcon, near Leipsic, and the large pictures, in which the surprising effects of Morok's sudden conversion had been painted so conspicuously, were also destroyed or unemployed, such superannuated miracles not being in fashion at Paris.

Morok was finishing his preparations in one of the dressing-rooms which had been assigned to him. Over his coat-of-mail, his greaves, and his armlets he wore a large pair of red trousers, fastened about the ankles by gilt bangles. His long caftan of black worsted, with purple and gold, was confined about the waist and wrists by other large gilt metal rings. This sombre costume gave the brute-tamer a look even more sinister than usual. His thick, yellowish beard fell in a large mass over his chest, and he was gravely folding a large piece of white muslin around his red cap. A devotee in Germany, and a pantomimist in Paris, Morok knew as well as his patrons how to accommodate himself to circumstances.

Seated in a corner of the dressing-room, and contemplating him with a kind of stupid admiration, was Jacques Rennepont, called Couche-tout-Nud. Since the day in which M. Hardy's premises were destroyed by fire, Jacques had never quitted Morok, passing every night in orgies, whose fierce ravages the iron frame of the brute-queller braved with impunity.

Jacques's countenance, on the contrary, began to alter excessively; his livid features, his marble paleness, and his gaze, sometimes stupid and sometimes ardent, betrayed the rapid inroads of low debauchery, whilst a sort of bitter and derisive smile continually played on his parched lips. His mind, formerly lively and gay, still seemed as though desirous to struggle against the deadening influence of an almost perpetual intoxication. Unfit for work, unable to exist without gross pleasures, and seeking to drown in liquor the last relics of good feeling remaining in him, and which revolted at his conduct, Jacques had come down without shame to accept the large amount of brutalising enjoyments which Morok found for him, he always paying the very considerable amount of their sensual revels, but never giving Jacques any money, in order to keep him wholly dependent on himself.

After having gazed some time at Morok with amaze, Jacques said to him:

"Well, I must say that yours is a fine profession,—you may boast fairly that at this moment there are not two such men as you in the world, and that is flattering. What a pity it is you do not confine yourself to one trade!"

"What do you mean?"

"What is this conspiracy, on account of which you feast and feed me so merrily every day and every night?"

"Oh, it proceeds; but the moment has not yet come, and that is why I wish to have you constantly near me

until the important hour. Have you anything to complain of?"

"Oh, no!" replied Jacques. "What reason have I? Scorched up by brandy as I am, if I had the inclination to work, I have not the strength. I have not, as you have, a marble head and an iron frame; but to get drunk on gunpowder would suit me better than anything else, and that is all I am now fit for, and yet it does not prevent me from thinking."

"Of what?"

"You know very well, when I think, I think of one thing only," said Jacques, with a sombre air.

"The Queen-Bacchanal? What, still?" said Morok, with disdain.

"Yes, continually — for ever — a little; and when I cease to think of her at all, I shall be dead, or become a thorough brute — the devil!"

"Why, you were never in better health, and never betrayed more life and wit, you blockhead," replied Morok, as he arranged his turban.

The conversation was here interrupted. Goliath entered the room suddenly.

The gigantic height of this Hercules was even bulkier than ever. He was dressed like Alcides, his enormous limbs, furrowed by veins as thick as a thumb, swelled under a flesh-coloured suit, beneath a pair of red drawers.

"What do you mean by rushing in here with all this uproar?" demanded Morok.

"It ain't much of an uproar compared with what the folks are making in the house. The company has got impatient, and is crying out like mad things for us to begin. However, if there was nothing more the matter than that—"

"What is it, then?"

"Why, La Mort can't perform to-night."

Morok turned quickly around, and asked almost uneasily, "And wherefore cannot he?"

"I tell you he can't. I've just been to look at him, and there he lies stretched out at the bottom of his cage, with his ears so flattened down to his head that you would almost fancy somebody had been and cut them off. You know very well what that means."

"Is that all?" said Morok, turning to the looking-glass to finish the arrangement of his head-dress.

"And enough, too, I should think, since it shows that he is in one of his fits of fury. I have not seen him so savage since that night when he tore the old screw of a horse to pieces in Germany. Why, his eyeballs glare like two fiery coals!"

"Then all you have to do is to put his pretty little collar on him," said Morok, calmly.

"His collar?"

"Yes, his collar with the springs."

"A very pretty job, forsooth! To be *femme de chambre* to such a toilet!"

"Silence!"

"That is not all!" continued Goliath, with an embarrassed air.

"What more?"

"I'd rather tell you another time."

"Will you speak when you are bid?"

"Well, then, *he* is here!"

"Who, you stupid brute?"

"The Englishman!"

Morok started, and his arms fell listlessly by his sides.

"The Englishman?" cried Morok, addressing Goliath. "Have you seen him? Are you quite sure it is he?"

"Quite, quite sure. I was looking from the hole in the curtain, and I spied him in a small box almost on the stage. I suppose he wants to have as good a view as he can. There's no mistaking him; and I should have recognised his high, narrow forehead, large nose, and great round eyes from any distance."

Morok again trembled, and this time almost convulsively; while Jacques, surprised at seeing a man usually so imperturbable and self-possessed thus violently agitated and alarmed, could not forbear asking:

"Who and what is this Englishman?"

"I first met him at Strasbourg," returned Morok, with the deepest dejection, "since which he has followed me unceasingly, travelling short stages with his own horses, and invariably stopping wherever I stopped, in order that he might be present at every performance I gave. But two days before my arrival in Paris, he quitted me, and I hoped I was delivered from him," added Morok, with a deep sigh.

"Delivered!" replied Jacques, with surprise. "Why, what could make you wish to be delivered from so excellent a customer, so warm an admirer?"

"Listen!" said Morok, whose melancholy and trepidation continued to increase. "The wretch has wagered a considerable sum that I shall be devoured in his presence by my own beasts during one of my exhibitions; and he hopes to gain his bet, that is why he so pertinaciously pursues me."

To Couche-tout-Nud this explanation appeared so replete with absurdity as well as eccentricity, that, for the first time for a long period, he burst into a loud and unconstrained laugh.

Morok, becoming livid with rage, threw himself on him with such deadly fury that Goliath was obliged to interfere.

"Come, come," said Jacques, "don't put yourself in such a passion; if the matter is so serious, I will not laugh any more."

Morok became calm, and, addressing Jacques, said, in a low, hoarse voice:

"Do you consider me a coward?"

"No, upon my life I do not!"

"Well, then, this Englishman, spite of his grotesque appearance, inspires me with a fear greater than that I ever felt for either my tiger or panther."

"You tell me so — and I believe you," replied Jacques, "but still I cannot comprehend in what manner the presence of this man can so alarm you."

"Why, remember, idiot," exclaimed Morok, "that compelled as I am to keep incessant watch over the slightest movement of the ferocious animal I control only with my gesture or look, it must needs be a very intimidating thing for me to know and to feel that two eager eyes are fixed on me with intense interest, in the hopes of seeing me torn to pieces by the beast I am contending with."

"Yes, yes," said Jacques, shuddering in his turn, "now, indeed, I fully understand your alarm; it is, indeed, enough to make any man feel afraid."

"Ay, and once there, it is useless for me to feign not to perceive this unlucky Englishman. Do what I will to drive him from my thoughts, he is ever before me, staring with his fixed, great, round eyes. Already have I nearly fallen a prey to my tiger Cain, who all but devoured my arm during a momentary forgetfulness on my part, produced by the presence of this infernal Englishman, whom may the devil carry off ere he brings me to further evil! Blood and thunder!" exclaimed Morok, "I feel assured this man is my evil genius, and will bring destruction on me;" and again Morok paced the lodge in an agony of fear.

"Ah, and when you consider what a state La Mort is in," interposed Goliath, with coarse brutality, "with his ears almost plastered down to his head! I tell you what, master, don't be a fool; for, if you persist in having him appear to-night, why, the Englishman will gain his wager, — that's all!"

"Begone, brute!" exclaimed Morok, goaded almost to madness; "drive me not wild with your croakings and

predictions of evil, but get you hence and prepare the collar for La Mort."

"Well, I am agreeable if you are," said the giant, quitting the box after having delivered himself of his witticism; "every one to his liking, and if you choose the panther to eat his supper off you, why that's your affair, not mine."

"But why," said Couche-tout-Nud, "since you entertain this dread, should you not announce to the audience that the panther is too ill to appear this evening?"

Morok shrugged his shoulders, and replied, with a species of savage excitement:

"Have you ever heard of the fierce pleasure of the gambler, who stakes honour — life on a card? Well, I, too, in the daily exercises in which my life is risked, find equally a wild and fierce pleasure, in daring death in presence of a trembling crowd, aghast at my audacity. In truth, in the terror with which this Englishman inspires me, I sometimes experience, in spite of myself, a kind of indescribable excitement which I abhor, and yet which dominates over me."

The prompter, entering the beast-tamer's room, interrupted him:

"May we give the signal, M. Morok?" he inquired; "the overture only lasts ten minutes."

"Yes," replied Morok.

"The commissary of police has just examined again the double chain for the panther, and the ring attached to the floor of the stage, at the end of the cavern in the first entrance," added the prompter, "and he says that it is excessively and sufficiently strong."

"Yes, sufficiently strong — except for me," murmured the beast-subduer.

"Then we may begin, M. Morok?"

"You may begin," replied Morok. And the prompter left the dressing-room.

CHAPTER III.

THE RISE OF THE CURTAIN.

THE customary signal sounded solemnly behind the curtain, the overture commenced, and, to say truth, was very little attended to.

The theatre presented a very animating sight. Except two stage-boxes, one on the right, and the other on the left hand of the audience, every place was occupied.

A considerable number of females, elegantly attired, who had as usual been attracted by the wild peculiarity of the performances, filled the boxes; whilst the stalls were for the most part occupied by the young gentry, who had been during the morning taking their rides in the Champs Elysées.

A few words exchanged from one stall to another will give some idea of the conversation.

"I tell you what, my dear fellow, there would not be such a crowd, nor such a fashionable audience, to see 'Athalie!'"

"Decidedly not. What are the miserable rantings of an actor compared with the roarings of an actual lion?"

"I really cannot understand how they allow this Morok to fasten his panther in one corner of the stage with an iron chain attached to a ring. Suppose the chain were to break?"

"Talking of breaking chains. Look at that pretty little flirt, Madame de Blinville, who is not a tigress. Do you see her in front of the first circle?"

"Oh, it suits her delightfully to have broken the con-

jugal chain, as you say. She is quite lovely, though, this season."

"Oh, there is the charming Duchesse de Saint-Prix. Why, really, all that is elegant and modish is here to-night, — ourselves of course excepted."

"It is, really, quite an Italian Opera, and everybody seems prepared to be gay and amused!"

"After all, people are right to be amused — it is probable that they will not be long so."

"Why not?"

"Suppose the cholera were to come to Paris?"

"Ah, bah!"

"Don't you believe in the cholera?"

"*Parbleu!* It seems to come from the north, walking-stick in hand."

"May the devil fly away with it on the road, so that we may not see its green visage here."

"They say it is in London."

"I hope it may remain there."

"For my part I'd rather talk of something else; it may be a weakness, but it always puts me out of spirits to talk of it."

"I quite agree with you."

"Oh, it is really she, — I am not mistaken!"

"Who?"

"Mlle. de Cardoville, who has just entered the stage-box with Morinval and his wife. This is really a resurrection, — this morning in the Champs Elysées, this evening here."

"Yes, really it is Mlle. de Cardoville."

"Oh, what a delicious girl!"

"Lend me your lorgnette."

"Well, what do you say?"

"Lovely, charming!"

"And with her beauty, she has the wit of a *démon*, eighteen years of age, three hundred thousand francs (12,000*l.*) a year, high birth, and is as free as air."

"Yes, only to imagine, that if she but said the word, I might be to-morrow, or even this very night, the happiest of men!"

"Why, you would go raving mad."

"I am told that her house in the Rue d'Anjou is enchantment. I hear of a bath-room and bedroom worthy of the Arabian Nights' Entertainments."

"And free as air, — that's the thing."

"Ah, if I were in her place!"

"Oh, I should do all sorts of things!"

"Ah, messieurs! What a happy mortal will he be who is the first loved!"

"Do you think, then, she will have more loves than one?"

"Being free as air."

"All the boxes are now filled, except the stage-box opposite Mlle. de Cardoville, — happy they who have engaged that box!"

"Do you see the English ambassador's lady in one of the dress-boxes?"

"And the Princesse d'Avilmar. What a monster bouquet!"

"I should like to know the name of that bouquet."

"*Parbleu!* It is Germigny!"

"How flattering to the lions and tigers to attract such a splendid company!"

"Look, messieurs, how all the *élégantes* are levelling their lorgnettes at Mlle. de Cardoville!"

"She creates quite a sensation."

"She's quite right to show herself, for they tried to make out that she was a lunatic."

"Only look what an attractive countenance!"

"Where? Where?"

"There, in the small box under that of Mlle. de Cardoville."

"Why, it is a pair of Nuremberg nutcrackers."

"Why, it is a wooden man."

"Look at his round goggle eyes."

"That nose!"

"That forehead!"

"It is a mask."

"Silence, silence, the curtain is going up."

The curtain rose at this moment.

Some words of explanation are requisite in order to understand what follows.

The ground tier of the stage-boxes on the left of the spectator was divided into two boxes, in one of which were several persons, who have been alluded to by the young men in the stalls.

The other compartment, the side nearest the stage, was occupied by the Englishman, that eccentric and sinister bettor who inspired Morok with so much fear.

We should be endowed with the rare and fantastic genius of Hoffman in order to paint worthily this physiognomy, at once so grotesque and frightful, which was visible from the dark shades of the back of the box.

This Englishman was about fifty years of age, with a forehead completely bald and conical; beneath which, surmounted with eyebrows shaped like circumflex accents, glared two large green eyes, singularly round and fixed, and very close to a nose that was very projecting and very sharp. A chin, like what is vulgarly called nut-cracker, half disappeared in a high and full cravat of white cambric, not less stiffly starched than the shirt-collar, which was rounded at the ends, and reached almost as high as the lobe of the ear. The hue of this excessively thin and bony face was, however, a very deep red, almost purple, which heightened the effect of the bright green pupils and the white of the balls of his eyes. The mouth, enormously wide, sometimes imperceptibly whistled a Scotch jig (always the same tune), and was sometimes contracted slightly towards the corners by a sardonic smile.

The Englishman was otherwise dressed with extreme

elegance. His blue coat, with metal buttons, showed his Marseilles waistcoat, of colour as snowy white as his large cravat; two splendid rubies formed his shirt-studs, and he leaned on the edge of his box, his aristocratic hands carefully covered with glazed kid gloves.

When we know the singular and cruel desire which had brought this bettor to all these representations, his grotesque countenance, instead of exciting a derisive laugh, became almost fearful, and we may then understand the sort of oppressive nightmare which Morok experienced at the sight of those two large eyes, so round and fixed, which seemed patiently to await the death of the tamer of brutes (and what a horrible death!) with inexorable confidence.

Above the dark box of the Englishman, and presenting a graceful contrast, were M. and Madame de Morinval and Mlle. de Cardoville. The latter had taken her seat on the side nearest to the stage. She had her hair exquisitely arranged, and wore a sky-blue china crape gown, with a large brooch, with orient pearls suspended from it, in the front of her bodice — nothing more, and she looked charmingly thus. In her hand she held an enormous bouquet, composed of the rarest flowers of India. The stephanotis and gardenia mingled their deep whiteness with the purple of the hibiscus and the amaryllis of Java.

Madame de Morinval, placed on the other side of the box, was also attired with taste and simplicity. M. de Morinval, a very good-looking, elegant, and fair young man, was seated behind the two ladies, who were expecting M. de Montbron every moment.

We must remind the reader that the stage-box opposite to Adrienne had been unoccupied up to this time.

The stage represented one of the gigantic forests of India. At the back there were large exotic trees, which spread out their leaves like umbrellas or arrows on the angular parts of the rugged rocks, leaving visible only a

few corners of a red sky. Each wing formed a clump of trees intersected by rocks, and on the left of the audience, and exactly under Adrienne's box, was the irregular opening of a dark and deep cavern, which seemed half broken in by a mass of granite blocks, strewed there by some volcanic eruption.

This spot of savage wildness and grandeur was marvellously done, and the illusion rendered as complete as possible. The lamps around the front of the stage were shaded with a purple hue, which threw over this sinister landscape those burning yet dark tints, which heightened still more this gloomy and impressive aspect.

Adrienne was leaning a little forward in her box, her cheeks slightly flushed, her eyes sparkling, and her heart palpitating; whilst she sought to discover in this representation the lonely forest described by the traveller, who related with how much generous intrepidity Djalma had precipitated himself on a tigress in her rage to save the life of a poor black slave, who had taken refuge in a cavern.

And, indeed, chance served marvellously to aid the memory of the young lady. Deeply absorbed in the contemplation of the scene, and by the ideas which they awakened in her bosom, she only thought of what was passing in the theatre.

Yet there was something passing in the opposite stage-box, empty until then, which was curious enough.

The door of this box was opened.

A man of forty years of age, with dark features, had entered, dressed like an Indian, with a long robe of orange silk, fastened around his loins by a green waistband, and he wore a small white turban. After having placed two chairs in the front of the box, looked about him for a moment all around the theatre, he started suddenly, his eyes sparkled, and he withdrew instantly.

This man was Faringhea. His appearance caused considerable surprise, mingled with curiosity, amongst

the auditory; for the majority of the audience had not, like Adrienne, a thousand reasons for being absorbed by the contemplation only of a picturesque decoration.

The attention of the public was increased on seeing a young man of extreme beauty, dressed as an Indian, in a long robe of white cashmere with loose sleeves, and a scarlet turban, striped with gold like his belt, in which shone a poniard, sparkling with precious stones, enter the box which Faringhea had just quitted.

This young man was Djalma. For an instant he stood erect at the door, casting from the back of his box a careless look over the immense audience, and then advancing a few steps, with an air of easy and graceful majesty, the prince seated himself quietly on one of the chairs; then turning his head towards the door, after a few seconds he seemed astonished at not seeing some one enter for whom he was evidently waiting.

She appeared at length — the box-door opener having assisted her to take off her cloak.

This person was a lovely fair girl, dressed with more show than taste, having on a gown of white silk, deep with wide cherry-coloured stripes, cut very low in the neck, with short sleeves; whilst two large bows of cherry riband, placed on each side of her chestnut hair, enclosed one of the prettiest, most coquettish, and most arch countenances ever looked at and admired.

Of course this was Rose-Pompon, wearing white long gloves absurdly loaded with bracelets; which, however, but half concealed her lovely arms, and in her hands she held an enormous bouquet of roses.

Far from imitating the quiet demeanour of Djalma, Rose-Pompon came bounding into the box, moving the chairs noisily, and fidgeting about in her seat for some time before she settled herself; then spreading out her fine gown, without being in the slightest degree intimidated by this brilliant assemblage, she made a little flirting movement, in which she put her nosegay of roses

under Djalma's nose, and then appeared to find her just equilibrium on the seat she occupied.

Faringhea now entered, closed the door of the box, and took his seat behind the prince.

Adrienne, all this time deeply absorbed in the contemplation of the Indian forest and in her sweet recollections, had not observed the arrival of these newcomers.

As she had completely turned away her head from the side of the theatre, and Djalma could at this time see no more than her half concealed profile, he had not yet recognised Mlle. de Cardoville.

CHAPTER IV.

LA MORT.

THE programme of the performances at the Porte St. Martin passed so lightly over the combat between Morok and the black panther, that it escaped the notice of the greater part of the audience, whose whole curiosity and interest seemed lodged in the scene in which the brute-conqueror was to appear in all his glory.

This indifference on the part of the public explains the curiosity produced among the assembled spectators by the arrival of Faringhea and Djalma, and which manifested itself (as we have recently seen upon the occasion of the Arabs appearing in any public place[1]) by a slight whisper, and general movement among the assemblage.

The smiling prettiness of Rose-Pompon, captivating even in spite of her glaring toilet, so completely out of character for such a theatre as the Porte St. Martin, added to her extremely free and easy manners, with the more than familiarity of her conduct towards the handsome Asiatic who accompanied her, increased and inflamed the universal astonishment; for, at the very moment when all eyes were on the box, Rose-Pompon, yielding with all the wilfulness of her untamed character to the impulse of the moment, held her large bouquet of roses up to the prince's face, trying, with the most win-

[1] This refers to the recent visit of the Arab chiefs to Paris in the year 1844. Theirs was a journey of amusement and instruction, and they were everywhere well received, even by royalty itself. — *Trans.*

ning and coquettish smiles, to induce him to return her attentions; but the prince, at the sight of the stage scenery, which so forcibly recalled his native country, instead of appearing sensible of this mirthful provocation, continued for several minutes to gaze steadfastly on the theatre; while Rose-Pompon, finding herself unnoticed, found solace in beating time with her bouquet on the cushion of the box, while the rapid contortions and undulations of her fair shoulders evinced that that animated dancer was becoming powerfully impressed with choreographic ideas, more or less "storm-blown," as the orchestra struck up a well-known and exhilarating air.

Seated immediately opposite the box where Faringhea, Djalma, and Rose-Pompon had taken up their stations, Madame de Morinval had quickly perceived the arrival of the last-named personages, neither did the coquettish whimsicalities of Rose-Pompon escape her notice. Stooping forwards, therefore, towards Mlle. de Cardoville, who still remained buried in her pleasing reveries, the young marquise said, smilingly:

"Upon my word, all the amusement of the evening is not confined to the stage. Pray look just opposite to us!"

"Directly opposite, do you mean?" repeated Adrienne, mechanically; and withdrawing herself from her pleasing contemplation, she languidly directed her looks in the direction indicated by Madame de Morinval. Heavens! what a sight met her eyes! She beheld Djalma seated beside a young and charming girl, who, with all the assumption of well-established familiarity, was holding a bouquet to his face, and with coquettish playfulness striving to make him inhale its odour.

Stunned, as though struck to the heart by some electric shock, at once sharp and profound, Adrienne became deadly pale, and almost instinctively she closed her eyes, as if to shut out the fearful picture, with an effort as powerless as the victim of an assassin's knife faintly

tries to turn away the dagger which has already been plunged in the breast.

"Djalma here, and in company with another!" said she, mentally; "after receiving my letter, which opened to him such a prospect of happiness!"

And at the bare idea of so cruel and insulting an act, the blush of mingled shame and indignation replaced the pallor of Adrienne's cheek, while, staggering beneath the too fatal reality, she internally cried, "Ah, Rodin did not deceive me, after all!"

We must resign all attempts to paint the overwhelming rapidity of emotions, which torture and annihilate in less time than they can be related. Thus Adrienne, from the sunny summit of the most radiant happiness, had been precipitated in less than a second to the lowest depths of the most poignant misery; for scarcely a minute had elapsed, when she replied to Madame de Morinval:

"What is it, my dear Julie, you find to amuse you so much in the opposite box?"

And this evasive mode of speech afforded the heart-wrung girl time to recover her self-possession. Fortunately, the long ringlets which hung down her face entirely concealed the pallid hue of her cheeks, so that her rapid alternation of colour was entirely lost upon Madame de Morinval, who gaily replied:

"Is it possible, my dear Adrienne, that you have not observed those Indians who but now entered the opposite stage-box? There, there, directly before us."

"Ah, yes, yes, I see!" said Adrienne, in a firm voice.

"Well, and do you not think them a very curious party?" continued the marquise.

"Come, come, ladies," said M. de Morinval, laughing; "have a little mercy upon poor strangers who are ignorant of our customs and observances; let that plead in excuse for their thus exhibiting themselves in public in such very questionable company."

"Truly," said Adrienne, with a bitter smile, "their

ingenuous forgetfulness of propriety is almost too much of untaught simplicity."

"Upon my word, though," said the marquise, "the female is really a very pretty creature. It is rather a pity she did not observe a little more decency in covering up her neck and arms, she must be half perished with cold in that exposed state. I should say she could be scarcely sixteen or seventeen years of age. Is it not lamentable to see one so young so far gone in vice?"

"You and your husband are quite in a charitable vein to-night, my dear Julie," replied Adrienne; "first you ask me to pity the Indian, then the creature he has brought with him. Now, then, who is it your good pleasure I should compassionate next?"

"No, no! I disclaim all pity for the handsome Indian in the scarlet and gold turban, that would be quite misplaced; for see how the pretty girl in the cherry-coloured ribands looks at him, as though devouring him with her eyes; just see how she hangs over her royal sultan — I think she is going to embrace him!"

"They are very amusing, to say the least of them," rejoined the marquise, partaking of the hilarity of her lord, and eyeing Rose-Pompon through her opera-glass; then, after a momentary pause, she addressed Adrienne, saying, "I am certain of one thing, however, and that is that, spite of all her airs and graces, the girl opposite is really passionately enamoured of her dark lover. I caught a look just now which contained volumes."

"But wherefore should you waste your penetration upon matters that do not in the least concern us?" asked Adrienne, gently. "What good can it do us to read the thoughts of the girl?"

"Well, all I can say is," said the marquis, in his turn directing his glass against his opposite neighbours, "that if she does love her Indian, I give her credit for excellent taste. I think I never saw a more perfectly beautiful countenance than that of the young Asiatic; true, I can

only see the profile, but that is pure and regular as an antique cameo. Do you not think so?" added M. Morinval, addressing Adrienne. "Remember it is simply taken in an artistical view that I venture to ask your opinion."

"As an object of art, certainly," said Adrienne, "the countenance you allude to is very handsome."

"Well, really!" said the marquise, "that little lady in the red ribands is as impertinent as she is pretty; do you not observe how she is pointing her glass at us, and how fixedly she is gazing?"

"Capital!" rejoined the marquis; "and pray observe how free and easily she places her hand on the shoulder of the prince, as if to make him share in the admiration with which you no doubt inspire her, Mlle. de Cardoville."

And in fact, wholly absorbed in the scenic decorations, recalling as they did so forcibly the home and native land of Djalma, the prince had taken not the slightest notice of all the coquettish attempts of Rose-Pompon to attract his notice, neither had he perceived the presence of Adrienne in the house.

"Oh, look! pray do," said Rose-Pompon, moving about in the front of the box, and continuing to gaze through her opera-glass at Mlle. de Cardoville (who, and not Madame de Morinval, attracted her eager attention). "I never saw such a thing before in my life as a beautiful woman with red hair! But just look in the box opposite, *prince charmant*, and you will see such a lovely creature, with rich golden hair, some would, perhaps, call red, but it is such a red, all manner of bright shades, — and what a heavenly countenance!" and as she pronounced these words, she, as has already been described, tapped Djalma on the shoulder, who, looking in the direction indicated, was first made sensible of the presence of Mlle. de Cardoville. Although partly prepared for this meeting, the prince experienced an emotion so sudden and overpowering that he forgot everything

but the beautiful object of his passionate love; involuntarily he rose from his seat, and was about to proceed at once to the box which contained the centre of all his hopes, when he felt the iron hand of Faringhea placed vigorously on his shoulder, while, speaking rapidly in the Hindostanee language, the métis exclaimed: "Courage, and to-morrow will see this woman at your feet!" and as Djalma struggled to free himself, Faringhea added, in order to restrain him, "But now I saw her turn alternately from red to pale — the effects of her jealous anger. No weakness, or all is lost!"

"I say!" said Rose-Pompon, turning abruptly around, "I won't have you talk in my presence in that abominable *patois* of yours; in the first place, it is not vastly civil; and in the second, it sounds so harsh and disagreeable that it always reminds me of cracking nuts, and I'm sure I wish I had some just now, for it's very dull, nobody speaking to me, or taking any notice of me."

"It was of yourself I was speaking to my lord," said the métis; "it referred to an agreeable surprise he is preparing for you."

"A surprise? Oh, that's nice! I do so love to be surprised. Make haste, then, *prince charmant*," cried she, regarding Djalma with an affectionate look, — "make haste, will you, and let me know all about it, too."

"My heart is crushed!" said Djalma, in a low, hoarse tone, still addressing Faringhea, in his native language.

"And to-morrow it will bound with joy and gladness," replied the métis. "It is only by cold contempt that a proud and haughty woman can be subdued; and I again repeat, to-morrow will see her trembling and confused, a suppliant at your feet!"

"Alas, no!" returned the prince, with affecting mournfulness; "by to-morrow she will hate and detest me for ever!"

"Yes, if she now sees you cowardly and weak — it is too late to recede. Look at her fully in the face, and then take the bouquet your young companion holds in her hand, and carry it to your lips, — then will you see this haughty woman change colour rapidly, as she did just now. Shall I then be believed by my lord?"

Driven by despair to a desire of essaying every means of obtaining a return to his love, and fascinated, even in spite of his better judgment, by the evil counsels of Faringhea, Djalma, first attentively regarding Mlle. de Cardoville, took, with a trembling hand, the bouquet from Rose-Pompon, and, again fixing his gaze on the countenance of Adrienne, pressed the flowers to his lips. At this bitter outrage, Mlle. de Cardoville started so convulsively, and her features assumed a look so agonising, that the prince easily perceived it.

"She is yours!" exclaimed the métis. "Did you observe, my lord, how she shuddered with jealousy? She is yours. Courage! and she will yet prefer you to that handsome young man placed behind her, for he it is who is your rival, and whom she has imagined she loved more than you!" And as though foreseeing the whirlwind of rage and hatred this disclosure would awaken in the mind of the prince, he rapidly added, "Yes, calmness and contempt are the weapons with which a proud woman must be assailed. Think you not that arrogant and favoured lover will have just cause to hate you for to-night's work?"

The prince passed his hand over his brows, burning with fiery indignation, while he forcibly repressed any further demonstration of his wrathful feelings.

"Good gracious me!" cried Rose-Pompon, poutingly, to Faringhea, "what can you be possibly saying to him to worry him like this?" Then addressing Djalma, she said, "Come, *prince charmant*, as we say in the fairy books, please to give me back my bouquet;" and with these words, she took it from the unconscious hand that held it, exclaiming, "Ah, I saw you press it to your lips!

I could almost eat it up after you have made it so sweet!" And then sighing, and casting a look of passionate tenderness on Djalma, she added, "Ah, that monster of a Nini-Moulin did not deceive me. All is very innocent between us. I have not so much as that to reproach myself for." And with her small white teeth she bit the extremity of the rose-coloured nails of her right hand, from which she had withdrawn the glove.

It is scarcely necessary to say that Adrienne's letter had never been received by the prince; neither was it true that he had gone into the country with Maréchal Simon.

During the three days in which M. de Montbron had not seen Djalma, Faringhea had persuaded the prince that, by giving publicity to the story of his having formed another attachment, he should reduce Mlle. de Cardoville to listen to his suit. In order to account for Djalma's appearance at the theatre, it is merely necessary to say that it was arranged in consequence of Rodin having been informed by Florine of her mistress's intention to visit the Porte St. Martin.

Before Djalma had recognised her, Adrienne, feeling her strength fail her, had been upon the point of quitting the theatre. That the man to whom she had hitherto assigned so high a place in her affections, — whom she had worshipped as a demigod, and, believing him to be plunged in a state of deep despair, had even departed from the severe etiquette prescribed for her sex, and written him, in all the fullness of confiding love, lines full of hope and sweet assurances, — should thus have repaid her generous and unsuspecting affection, by appearing before her, after the receipt of her billet of fond promises and encouraging words, in company with a being so lost as was his unfortunate companion, stung the proud spirit of Adrienne to the quick. And little mattered it to her tortured feelings whether the outrage had been premeditated or not. But when she found herself recognised by the prince, when

carrying his insulting conduct so far as to look her full in the face, and, as if trying to brave her utmost indignation, raise to his lips the bouquet belonging to the guilty creature he had publicly intruded on her notice, — then Adrienne's weakness was gone, and far from thinking of returning home, she determined to remain, and even experienced a sort of barbarous pleasure in witnessing the last expiring struggles of the pure, celestial flame which had burnt so brightly in her heart.

With front erect, proud and sparkling eye, and lip curled with the most withering contempt, Adrienne returned the prince's gaze with unflinching firmness; then turning to the marquise, who, in common with the rest of the audience, was entirely engrossed by the preparations and decorations of the stage, she said:

"This disgusting exhibition of savage manners is at least perfectly in keeping with the other entertainments of the evening!"

"It is, indeed," rejoined the marquise; "and my dear uncle will probably have lost the most amusing part of the performances!"

"M. de Montbron!" cried Adrienne, quickly, and with a degree of bitterness she could scarcely restrain. "True, he will be sorry he did not witness the whole. I long for his coming. Is it not to him I am indebted for the delightful evening I am passing?"

Possibly Madame de Morinval might have remarked the cutting irony which marked the words and looks of Adrienne, while she sought in vain to repress their outward demonstration, if, all of a sudden, a deep, prolonged, and terrific roaring had not attracted her attention, as well as that of the whole audience, who, as we have already said, felt very little interest in the preparatory scenes which were to bring along the appearance of Morok, the universal hero. All eyes were instantaneously turned towards the cavern, situated on the left side of the stage, and immediately beneath the box occupied by Mlle. de

Cardoville and her friends, while a thrill of intense curiosity pervaded the audience.

A second roaring, even louder, deeper, and apparently more angry than the former, issued this time from the subterranean abode, whose opening was concealed by artificial brushwood, easily removed. At this determined roar, the Englishman stood up in his narrow box, stretched himself out as far as he could, and began to rub his hands with considerable animation, then remained completely immovable, his large round eyes fixed, and gleaming with anticipated triumph, never once removing their ardent gaze from the entrance of the cavern.

At these ferocious roarings, Djalma had also started, in spite of all the excitement of love, jealousy, and hatred to which he was a prey. The sight of this forest, and the howls of the panther, caused in him a deep emotion, by again awakening his remembrances of his country, and those deadly hunts, which, like war, have such terrible excitement in them. If he had suddenly heard the darions and gongs of his father's army sound the attack, he could not have been stirred up with wilder emotion! Soon low growls, like the distant thunder, almost drowned the low, hoarse cries of the panther; the lion and tiger, Judas and Cain, replied from their cages at the lower end of the theatre. At this fearful concert, with which his ears had been so often struck in the midst of the solitudes of India, when he was out either in the chase or war, Djalma's blood boiled in his veins; his eyes sparkled with savage ardour, whilst, with his two hands grasping the edge of the box, his whole frame quivered with convulsive thrill. The audience, Adrienne, no longer existed for him. He was in a forest of his native land, and he scented the tiger.

At this moment his fine features betrayed a feeling so intrepid and fierce that Rose-Pompon gazed at him with a sort of fright, mingled with passionate admiration. For the first time, perhaps, in her life, her lovely blue

eyes, usually so mirthful and mischievous, betrayed a serious emotion. She could not account to herself for what she felt. Her heart was oppressed, and palpitated violently, as if some misfortune were about to happen.

Yielding to an impulse of involuntary fear, she grasped Djalma's arm, saying:

"Do not look at the cavern in that manner, you quite frighten me!"

The prince did not hear her.

"Oh, there he is, there he is!" murmured the crowd, with almost one voice.

Morok appeared at the back of the stage.

Morok, dressed as we have described him, carried now a bow and a long quiver full of arrows. He descended the sham rocks slowly, in the path which sloped gradually down towards the middle stage, stopping from time to time, and pretending to listen; then again advancing with the utmost circumspection.

Whilst he was looking first on one side and then on the other, his eyes (involuntarily, no doubt) met the two staring green orbs of the Englishman, whose box was so near the cavern.

The features of the brute-tamer then suddenly contracted so fearfully that Madame de Morinval, who was examining him very closely by the aid of an excellent lorgnette, said suddenly to Adrienne:

"My dear, the man's afraid; some misfortune will happen to him!"

"What misfortune can happen?" replied Adrienne, with a bitter smile. "Misfortune in the midst of so brilliant, so gay, and so animated a crowd — misfortune — and here this evening? Oh, my dear Julie, don't think of such a thing; it is in the shade and in solitude that misfortunes come, but never in the midst of a joyous assembly thus brilliantly illuminated."

"Heavens, Adrienne, take care!" exclaimed the marquise, unable to repress a cry of alarm, and seizing Mlle.

de Cardoville's arm, as if to draw her towards herself. "Do you see it?"

And, with trembling hand, the marquise pointed to the opening in the cave.

Adrienne bent her head forward quickly, and looked at the cavern.

"Take care! Do not stoop so forward," she said to Adrienne.

"You are quite silly to be so frightened, my dear," said the marquis to his wife, "the panther is very securely fastened; and if he were to break his chain, which is very improbable, we shall be here out of his reach."

An increasing clamour of curiosity arose amongst the audience, and all eyes were fixed on the cave with the deepest interest.

Between the artificial bushes, which she dashed aside suddenly with her broad breast, the black panther suddenly appeared; twice she thrust forward her flat head, lighted up with yellow and flaming eyes; then opening her red throat, she emitted another roar, which displayed her double row of formidable fangs.

A double iron chain, and a collar also of iron, painted black, mingling with her ebony skin and the darkness of the cavern, the illusion was complete, and the terrible beast seemed perfectly free in her den.

"Ladies," said the marquis, suddenly, "look at the Indians; their emotion is really superb."

In fact, at the sight of the panther, the fierce ardour of Djalma had reached its height, his eyes glistened to their pearly orbits, like two black diamonds, his upper lip curled convulsively, and with an expression of animal ferocity, as if he had been in a violent paroxysm of rage.

Faringhea, then leaning on the edge of the box, was also a prey to deep emotion, caused by singular chance. "This black panther, of so rare a species," thought he, "which I see here, in Paris, on a stage, must be that which

the Malay (the Thug or Strangler, who had tattooed Djalma at Java, whilst he was asleep) carried off from its den, when it was a very small cub, and sold to a European captain. The power of Bohwanie is everywhere," added the Thug, in his sanguinary superstition.

"Don't you think," repeated the marquis, addressing Adrienne, "that these Indians are superb to see as they now are?"

"Perhaps they have been present at a similar hunt in their own country," said Adrienne, as if she sought to summon up and brave all that was cruel in her recollections.

"Adrienne," said the marquise to Mlle. de Cardoville, with a voice of agitation, "now that the beast-tamer is so near us, is not his face fearful to look at? I tell you the man is afraid."

"The fact is," added the marquis, in a serious tone, "his paleness is quite frightful, and seems to increase every moment as he comes nearer to this side; and they say that, if he loses his presence of mind for a moment, he incurs the greatest peril."

"Ah, how horrible that would be," exclaimed the marquis, addressing Adrienne, "if he were wounded here, under our very eyes!"

"Do people die of a wound?" asked Adrienne of the marchioness, with an accent of such cold indifference that the young lady looked at Mlle. de Cardoville with surprise, and replied:

"Really, my dear, that is a very inhuman speech of yours!"

"Is it? Then it must be the atmosphere in which we are that acts upon me," said the young lady, with a cold smile.

"See, see, the beast-tamer is about to fire off an arrow at the panther!" said the marquis, suddenly. "And then I dare say he will feign the personal struggle."

Morok was at this instant in the front of the stage, and must cross it to reach the opening of the den. He paused for a moment, adjusted an arrow to the string of his bow, knelt behind a piece of rock, and took steady aim ; then the arrow whistled, and was lost in the depth of the cavern, into which the panther had retreated, after having shown his menacing front for a moment.

Scarcely had the arrow been shot, when La Mort, purposely provoked by Goliath, who was invisible, uttered a roar of rage, as if she had been hit.

Morok's pantomime became very expressive, and he expressed such joy at having wounded the savage brute that shouts of applause echoed around the vast theatre. Then casting from him his bow, he drew his poniard from his belt, placed it between his teeth, and began to crawl on his hands and knees, as if he would surprise the wounded panther in her cave.

To render the illusion more perfect, La Mort, again aroused by Goliath, who struck her with an iron rod, roared tremendously from the depths of her den.

The dark aspect of the forest, scarcely lighted up by the red lights, had such an impressive effect, the howlings of the infuriated panther, the gestures, attitude, and countenance of Morok were so imprinted with terror, that the auditory, attentive and excited, remained in the deepest silence. All respiration appeared suspended, and it would seem a sensation of alarm had seized all the spectators, as if they were anticipating some horrible event.

What rendered Morok's pantomime so really appalling was that, as he gradually approached the den, he at the same time drew near to the Englishman's box. Despite himself, the beast-tamer, fascinated by his fear, could not take his gaze off the round green eyes of this man, and it would seem as if each of the sudden motions he made in crawling along was responsive to a shock of magnetic attraction caused by the fixed stare of the sinister bet-

"MOROK UTTERED A SAVAGE SHOUT."

tor; and thus, the nearer Morok approached him the more disturbed and livid did his features become.

Again, at the sight of this pantomine, which was no longer feigned, but the real expression of dread, the deep and throbbing silence which pervaded the auditory was interrupted by acclamations and shouts, to which were added the roarings of the panther and the low and remote growls of the lion and tiger.

The Englishman, leaning almost out of his box, his lips curling with his sardonic smile, his large eyes steadfastly fixed, was breathless and intensely excited. The perspiration streamed down his bald red forehead, as if he had really given out an incredible amount of magnetic power to attract Morok, whom he now saw at the very orifice of the cavern.

The moment was decisive. Curled up and gathered together as it were, with his poniard in his hand, watching with gesture and with eye every movement of La Mort, who, roaring, irritated, and opening her enormous throat, seemed determined to defend the entrance to her den, Morok watched the moment when he could rush upon her.

There is such a fascination in danger that Adrienne, in spite of herself, partook of the deep feeling of curiosity mingled with affright which pervaded all the palpitating spectators, and leaning forwards, like the marquise, and looking fixedly at the scene of appalling interest, the young girl held mechanically in her hands her Indian bouquet which she had still preserved.

Suddenly Morok uttered a savage shout and threw himself on La Mort, who responded to his cry by a fierce roar, and precipitated herself on her master with such an agony of desperation that Adrienne, dreadfully alarmed at seeing the man, as she believed, lost, fell back in her chair, hiding her features with both her hands.

Her bouquet fell on the stage, and rolled into the den where Morok and the panther were fiercely struggling.

As rapid as lightning, as supple and agile as a tiger, yielding to the influence of his love and the savage excitement aroused within him by the roarings of the panther, Djalma was on the stage at a bound, and, drawing his poniard, dashed into the cavern to obtain Adrienne's bouquet. At this moment a fearful cry burst from the wounded Morok, calling for help. The panther, more infuriated at the sight of Djalma, made a desperate effort to break her chain, which, unable to effect, she stood up on her hind legs in order to clutch Djalma at that moment within reach of her tremendous claws. To bend his head, throw himself on his knees, and at the same time to thrust his poniard twice into her belly with the rapidity of lightning, was Djalma's mode of escaping certain death. The panther roared, and fell on her side with all her weight on the prince; and, for the moment, whilst her dreadful spasmodic agony endured, nothing was seen but a confused and heaving mass of black limbs, and white and blood-stained garments. Then Djalma arose pale, bleeding, wounded, and placing his foot on the carcass of the slain panther, his eye sparkling with savage fire, he held up the bouquet of Adrienne, and cast on her a look which told his impassioned love.

At this moment it was that Adrienne's senses utterly forsook her; for until then a superhuman courage had enabled her to gaze on the fearful progress of this deadly struggle.

PART X.

THE COUNCIL

CHAPTER V.

THE TRAVELLER.

It is night.

The moon is shining, the stars scintillate in the midst of the sky with melancholy serenity, the fierce whistlings of the north wind, that unpropitious, dry, icy blast, cross, meet, and burst in violent shocks, and, with their cutting and harsh gusts, sweep the heights of Montmartre.

On the most elevated point of this hill a man is standing. His tall shadow is projected over the stony soil brightened by the moon.

This traveller contemplates the immense city spread beneath his feet.

Paris, whose dark outline presents its towers, its cupolas, its domes, its steeples, in the blue clearness of the horizon, whilst from out the midst of this ocean of stones there arises a luminous vapour which reddens the starry azure of the zenith.

It is the distant light of a thousand fires which, in the evening, the hour of pleasure, so joyously light up the noisy capital.

"No," said the traveller, "it will not be; the Lord doth not will it.

"Twice hath been enough.

"Five centuries since, and the all-avenging hand of the Most High drove me from the farthermost parts of Asia hither. A solitary traveller, I had left behind

me more mourning, more despair, more disasters, more deaths, than had the innumerable armies of a hundred devastating conquerors. I entered this city, and it was also decimated.

"Two centuries since, and that inexorable hand which conducts me throughout and over the world also impelled me hither, and this time as the other, that scourge, which the All-Powerful hath from all time attached to my footsteps, hath ravaged this city, first assailing my brethren already so sorely spent by toil and misery.

"Yes, my brethren, the brethren of me, the artisan of Jerusalem, the artisan accursed of the Lord, who, in my person hath cursed the race of workmen, a race always suffering, always destitute, always slaves, and who, as we march, march, without pause or rest, without reward or hope, until all — men, women, children, and old folk — die beneath a yoke of iron, — a homicidal yoke which others in their turn take up, and which workmen, from age to age, bear on their obedient and overladen shoulders.

"And now, for the third time in five centuries, I reach the highest point of one of the hills which top this city.

"And perchance with me I bring fear, and desolation, and death.

"And this city, intoxicated in the whirl of its pleasures, and its nocturnal rejoicings, knows not, — ah, knows not that I am at its gates!

"But, no, no, my presence betokeneth no new calamity.

"The Lord, in his inscrutable decrees, hath led me hither through France, making me in my route avoid even the humblest hamlet, and thus no funereal knell hath marked my progress.

"And then the spectre hath left me.

"This livid and green spectre and its deep and bloodshot eyes, — when I trode the soil of France its moist and ice-cold hand relinquished mine — it vanished.

"And still — I feel — that — that — the atmosphere of death is still around me.

"These piercing blasts of the ill-boding wind leave me not; but, enveloping me in their stormy gusts, seem with their poisoned breath to propagate this scourge.

"Doubtless the anger of the Lord is appeased.

"Perchance my presence here is a menace which those whom it should intimidate will be made conscious of.

"Yes; for otherwise he will, on the contrary, strike a blow of still more fearful sound, by casting all at once terror and death into the inmost heart of the country — into the bosom of this vast city.

"Oh, no — no! Have mercy, Lord!

"No; he will not condemn me to this fresh punishment.

"Alas, in this city my brethren are more numerous and more miserable than elsewhere!

"And it is I — I — who bring them death!

"No, the Lord will have pity! For, alas, the seven descendants of my sister are at length assembled in this city!

"And is it I who shall bring them death?

"Death, instead of the instant succour which they require?

"For this woman, who, like me, wandereth from one end of the world to the other, after having once again broken the snares of their enemies, — this woman who also pursueth her eternal journey —

"In vain hath she foreseen that again fresh misfortunes menace those who belong to me by my sister's blood.

"The invisible hand which impelleth me driveth before me the wandering woman.

"Perpetually urged forwards by their resistible whirlwind, in vain hath she cried, when, beseeching, she was compelled to abandon those of my blood, —

"'At least, O Lord, let me finish my task!'

"'Onwards!'

"'But a few days, for pity's sake — a few days only!'

"'Onwards!'

"'I leave those I would protect on the brink of an abyss.'

"'Onwards! Onwards!'

"And the errant star hath again shot forth on its eternal route.

"And her voice hath traversed space, and hath called on me to succour mine own.

"When her voice reached unto me, I perceived that the offspring of my sister were still exposed to fearful perils. These perils increase hourly.

"Oh, say, Lord, say, shall the children of my sister escape that fatality which, for so many ages, hath weighed down my race?

"Wilt thou pardon me in them? Wilt thou punish me in them?

"Ah, grant that they may obey the last wishes of their ancestor!

"Grant that they may unite their charitable hearts, their vast power, their fine understandings, their enormous wealth!

"So will they work for the future happiness of mankind. Thus, perchance, may they ransom me from eternal punishment!

"Those words of the Man-God, 'Love one another!' will be their sole end — their sole means.

"United by these all-potent words, they will struggle, they will conquer those false priests who have laughed to scorn the precepts of love, peace, and hope of the Man-God, for devices filled with hatred, violence, and despair.

"These false priests, who, suborned by the powerful and the happy of this world — their accomplices from all time — instead of asking here below for some small

portion of happiness for my suffering brethren, who groan for ages, dare, in thy name, Lord, to say that the poor are for ever doomed to the tortures of this world, and that the desire, or even the hope, of diminished suffering on this earth is a crime in thy eyes, because thy will is the happiness of the minority — the misery of nearly all human kind. Oh, blasphemy! Is it not the contrary of these murderous assertions that is worthy of thy divine will?

"For mercy's sake hear me, Lord! Deliver from their enemies the descendants of my sister — from the mechanic to the king's son. Do not thou allow to be destroyed the germ of an association so powerful, so promising, and which, by thy grace, may be hereafter recognised amongst the benefactors to humanity.

"Permit me, Lord, to unite them, since they are separated — to defend them, since they are assailed. Let me convey hope to those who have hope no longer, to inspire courage to those who are depressed, to raise those who are menaced with falling, and to sustain those who are progressing in good.

"And, perchance, their struggles, their devotion, their virtues, their griefs, may expiate my crime — mine, whom misfortune, misfortune alone, had rendered unjust and wicked.

"Lord, since thy all-powerful hand hath conducted me hither for an end of which I am unconscious, put off at length thine anger — let me not be the instrument of thy vengeance!

"Enough of mourning on the earth! For two years thy creatures fall by millions at my footsteps.

"The world is decimated; a veil of mourning hath covered the whole universe.

"From Asia to the ices of the pole I have marched, and there hath been death.

"Dost thou not hear, Lord, the lengthened sob which ariseth from earth towards thee?

"Mercy for all, and for me!

"Let me for one day — for one day only — bring together the descendants of my sister, and they are saved!"

And saying these words, the traveller fell on his knees, and raised to heaven his supplicating hands.

Suddenly the wind blew with additional violence; its shrill wailings burst forth into a storm.

The traveller shuddered. With an agonised accent he exclaimed:

"Lord, the death-wind bloweth with rage. It seems as though its whirlwind impelled me. Lord, dost thou then reject my prayer?

"The spectre! Oh, the spectre! 'Tis here — 'tis here! Again — again! Its green and sickly visage is working with convulsive agitation — its red eyes roll in their sockets! Begone! Avaunt! Away! Its hand — oh, its icy, icy hand — hath clutched mine! Mercy, Lord, mercy!"

"Onwards!"

"O Lord, this scourge — this fearful scourge — again to conduct it to this city! My brethren will be the first to perish! They so miserable! Mercy!"

"Onwards!"

"And the descendants of my sister! Mercy — oh, mercy!"

"Onwards!"

"O Lord, have mercy! I can no longer keep my footing here. The spectre drags me towards the declivity of the hill! My step is as rapid as the death-wind which drives me forward. Already I see the walls of the city. Oh, mercy, Lord, mercy, for the descendants of my sister! Spare them! Grant that I be not their executioner, and that they may triumph over their enemies!"

"Onwards! Onwards!"

"The ground flies from beneath my tread. Already

I am at the gate of the city — oh, already, Lord! Yet is there time. Oh, mercy for this sleeping city! Let it not suddenly awake with cries of fear, despair, and death! Lord, I touch the very threshold of its gate. Thou wilt have it so, then? It is decreed! Paris, the scourge, the pest, is in thy bosom! Ah, cursed — for ever cursed!"

"Onwards! Onwards! Onwards!"[1]

[1] In 1346 the famous black pest ravaged the earth. It presented the same symptoms as the cholera, and the same inexplicable phenomenon as to its progressive and peculiar advances in a prescribed route. In 1660 another and similar epidemic again decimated the globe.

It is well known that the cholera declared itself in Paris by interrupting (if we may use the phrase) its progressive march with one enormous and inexplicable bound. And, it may be remembered, also, that the northeast wind prevailed constantly during the most terrible ravages of the cholera.

CHAPTER VI.

THE COLLATION.

THE day after the ominous traveller, descending the heights of Montmartre, had entered Paris, there was a vast stir in the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier.

Although it was scarcely noon, the princess, without being full-dressed (she had too much good taste for that), was still attired with more than usual care. Her light hair, instead of being simply arranged in bandeaux, was curled and *crêpée*, which suited her full and florid features extremely well; her cap was ornamented with new pink ribands; and Madame de Saint-Dizier appeared so slim in her gray merino gown, one might suppose that Madame Grivois must have required some assistance and the efforts of another of the princess's maids to attempt and succeed in this remarkable reduction of the full figure of their mistress.

We will presently explain the actual cause of this slight return to mundane coquetry.

The princess, followed by Madame Grivois, her housekeeper, gave her final instructions respecting some preparations which were making in a large salon, in the midst of which was a large round table, covered with a crimson velvet cloth and surrounded by several chairs, in the midst of which was a gilt armchair, which distinctly marked out the place of honour.

In one of the angles of the salon, not far from the fireplace, in which an excellent fire was burning, there was a sort of temporary sideboard, on which were the

varied elements of a most delicate and exquisite collation. On silver plates was a pyramid of sandwiches of carps' roes cured in anchovy, preserved tunny minced with truffles of Périgord (it was in Lent); and in another place, in silver dishes, kept warm over spirit-lamps, were *bouchées de queues* of cray-fish of the Meuse in clotted cream, smoking in their raised puff paste, light and glazed, seeming capable of rivalling in succulence the small patties of the Marennes oysters stewed in Madeira, and sturgeon minced and seasoned most delicately with allspice.

Besides these serious dishes were lighter productions, — small biscuits with sliced pineapple, puffs of strawberries (very scarce at this season), orange jellies served in the entire rind of the fruit, artistically cut for that purpose; rubies and topazes, stimulated by the wines of Bordeaux, Madeira, and Alicant, sparkled in large crystal decanters, whilst champagne and two carafes of Sèvres porcelain filled, one with coffee *à la crême*, and the other with chocolate *à la vanille ambrée*, were almost become like ices, plunged as they were in a large cooler of sculptured silver filled with ice.

But what gave to this dainty collation a singularly Apostolic and Romish character, were certain productions religiously elaborated. There were charming little Calvaries of apricot tartlets, sacerdotal mitres in sweetmeats, episcopal crosses in marchpane, to which the princess had added, with an attention full of delicacy, a small cardinal's hat in cherry sugar, adorned with falling cords made of spun sugar. The most important piece of these Catholic sweetmeats, the *chef-d'œuvre* of the head cook of Madame de Saint-Dizier, was a superb crucifix of angelica, with its crown of preserved barberries.[1]

[1] A person, whose word may be relied on, informed us that he was present at a dinner at the house of a very eminent prelate, when he saw a similar exhibition at dessert, which caused him to say to the prelate in question, "I thought, monseigneur, that we ate the Saviour's body in two forms (*sous les*

Such are the strange profanations at which (and with reason) even the least really pious persons are disgusted. But from the infamous juggle of the tunic of Treves to the unblushing jest of the shrine at Argenteuil, pious persons like the Princesse de Saint-Dizier seem to try how absurd they can make traditions worthy of respect.

After having cast a very satisfactory glance over the collation thus prepared, Madame de Saint-Dizier said to Madame Grivois, pointing to the gilt armchair, which seemed destined for the president of this meeting:

"Have they placed my *chancelière*[1] under the table for his eminence's feet? He always complains of cold."

"Yes, madame," said Madame Grivois, after having looked under the table, "the *chancelière* is there."

"Desire them to fill a brazen bowl with boiling water, in case his eminence should not find the *chancelière* sufficient to warm his feet."

"Yes, madame."

"Throw some more wood on the fire."

"But, madame, it is really burning already so fiercely, pray look; and then, if his eminence is always cold, Monseigneur the Bishop de Halfagen is always too warm — he is continually in a perspiration."

The princess shrugged her shoulders, and said to Madame Grivois, "Is not his Eminence Monseigneur the Cardinal de Malipieri the superior of Monseigneur the Bishop de Halfagen?"

"Yes, madame."

"Well, then, according to the hierarchy, it is monseigneur to suffer from the heat, and not his eminence who is to suffer from the cold, therefore do as I desire you, and add wood to the fire. Besides, nothing is more plain, — his eminence is Italian, whilst monseigneur

deux espèces), but not in Angelica (*en angélique*)?" We should add that this Apostolic sweetmeatry was not the prelate's own doing, but resulted from the somewhat exaggerated Catholicism of a pious lady who had great authority in the house of monseigneur.

[1] A fur mat enclosed in leather.

belongs to the north of Belgium; and it is, therefore, quite natural that they should be habituated to different climates."

"As you wish, madame," said Madame Grivois, putting two enormous logs on the fire; "but the heat of this room is enough to suffocate monseigneur the bishop."

"Eh, and I, too, find it overpoweringly hot here; but our holy religion teaches us sacrifice and mortification!" said the princess, with a touching expression of devotion.

We may now guess the cause of the somewhat coquettish toilet of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, who was about to receive with all ceremony the prelates who, connected with the Père d'Aigrigny and other dignitaries of the church, had already held at the princess's hôtel a council on a small scale.

A bride of twenty who gives her first ball, an emancipated minor who gives his first bachelor's dinner, a woman of genius who for the first time reads aloud her first unpublished work, are not more happy, more proud, and at the same time more anxiously eager about their guests than was Madame de Saint-Dizier about her prelates.

To see most important interests canvassed and debated in her house and in her presence, to hear personages of high intellect ask her opinion as to certain practical matters relative to influences over certain female associations, was enough to make the princess die with proud satisfaction, for their eminences and their highnesses thus stamped with authority for ever her pretension to be considered as a holy mother of the church, and it was, therefore, in honour of these indigenous or exotic prelates that she had displayed a thousand coaxing attentions and coquettish cares.

Nothing could be more logical, moreover, than the successive transformations of this heartless woman, who so dearly doted on, so passionately adored, intrigue and

the rule of the coterie. She had, with her progress in years, naturally advanced from the intrigue amorous to the intrigue political, and from the intrigue political to the intrigue religious.

At the moment when Madame de Saint-Dizier was terminating the inspection of her preparations, a noise of carriages was heard in the courtyard of the hôtel which announced the arrival of the personages she expected, and these individuals were assuredly of the highest rank, for, contrary to all usage, she went to receive them at the door of her first salon.

They were the Cardinal Malipieri, who was always cold, and the Belgian Bishop de Halfagen, who was always hot, accompanied by Père d'Aigrigny.

The Roman cardinal was a tall man, rather bony than thin, with a haughty and crafty countenance, with yellow and puffed cheeks; he squinted considerably, and his black eyes were deeply marked with a brown circle. The Belgian bishop was a little, short, thickset man, with a prominent stomach, apoplectic appearance, a cautious air, and a hand dimpled, soft, and plump.

The party soon assembled in the large salon, and whilst the cardinal placed himself close to the fireplace, the bishop began to perspire and puff, glancing from time to time at the iced chocolate and coffee, which he relied on as his aids in supporting the ardour of this artificial dog-star.

The Père d'Aigrigny, coming up to the princess, said to her, in a low voice:

"Will you give orders that the Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont is to be admitted when he calls and asks for you?"

"Is the young priest here, then?" inquired the princess, with much surprise.

"Yes, since the day before yesterday, we had him summoned to Paris by his superiors. You shall know all. As to Rodin, Madame Grivois will go, as she did

"'A LITTLE BORDEAUX, MADAME.'"

the other day, and let him in by the little door on the private staircase."

"Will he come to-day?"

"He has some very important disclosures to make to us. He has desired that Monseigneur the Cardinal and Monseigneur the Bishop should be present at the interview, for they have been informed of everything, at Rome, by the Father-General, in their quality of *affiliés*."

The princess rang, gave her orders, and, returning to the cardinal, said to him, in an accent of most earnest solicitude:

"Does your eminence begin to feel any warmer? Will your eminence have a bowl of boiling water under your feet? Will your eminence like that the fire should be increased?"

At this, the Belgian bishop, who was wiping his perspiring brow, heaved a despairing sigh.

"A thousand thanks, princess," replied the cardinal to Madame de Saint-Dizier, in very good French, with a horrid Italian accent. "I am really overpowered by so much attention."

"Will not monseigneur take anything?" said the princess to the bishop, looking towards the buffet.

"If you will allow me, princess, I will take a little *café à la glace*."

And the prelate made a prudent circuit, in order to reach the collation without approaching the fireplace.

"Will not your eminence take one of these small oyster-patties, they are quite warm?" said the princess.

"I know them well, madame," replied the cardinal, with the air of a gourmand, "they are so exquisite there is no resisting them."

"What wine shall I have the honour of offering to your eminence?" said the princess, most graciously.

"A little Bordeaux, madame, if you will be so kind."

And as the Père d'Aigrigny was about to pour the

wine out for the cardinal, the princess contended with him for this honour.

"Your reverence will, I trust, approve," said the Père d'Aigrigny to the cardinal, whilst the latter was seriously devoting himself to the little oyster-patties, "that I did not think it necessary to summon to-day Monseigneur the Bishop de Mogador, nor Monseigneur the Archbishop de Nanterre, nor our Holy Mother Perpétue, the superior of the Convent de Ste. Marie, the conversation we are about to have with his reverence the Père Rodin and the Abbé Gabriel being exclusively private and confidential."

"Our dear father has acted with sound discretion," said the cardinal; "for although, in its possible consequences, this Rennepont affair is deeply interesting to all the Apostolical and Romish Church, yet there are certain things which it is requisite to keep secret."

"Then I will avail myself of this opportunity of thanking your eminence, once again, for having deigned to make an exception in favour of a very obscure and very humble servant of the church," said the princess, making a very respectful and lowly reverence to the cardinal.

"It was just and due, princess," replied the cardinal, bowing, after he had deposited his empty glass on the table. "We know how much the church owes you for the salutary impulse you give to the religious charities of which you are the patroness."

"As to that, your eminence may be certain that I should refuse all succour to the indigent applicant who is not duly entitled by a note of confession."

"And it is only thus, madame," replied the cardinal, allowing himself at the moment to be tempted by the appetising appearance of a *bouchée aux queues d'écrevisse*, "it is only thus that charity is rightly evinced. I care little if impiety is hungry — piety is quite a different thing, quite;" and the prelate swallowed the *bouchée*

with great relish. "Besides," he added, "we know, also, with what ardent zeal you so inexorably pursue the impious and rebellious against the authority of our Holy Father."

"Your eminence may be convinced that I am Roman in heart, soul, and conviction. I make no difference between a Gallican and a Turk," said the princess, bravely.

"Madame la Princesse is right," observed the Belgian bishop. "I will say more, a Gallican ought to be more hateful to the church than a pagan; and I am, on this subject, of the opinion of Louis XIV. Some one asked him a favour for some man of his court. 'Never,' said the great king; 'this man is a Jansenist.' 'He, sire! He is an atheist.' 'That's a different thing,' said the king, 'and I will grant the favour.'"

This little episcopal pleasantry caused considerable laughter, after which Père d'Aigrigny continued seriously to address the cardinal:

"Unfortunately, as I shall presently show your eminence, in reference to the Abbé Gabriel, if he were not watched closely, the lower clergy would be infected with Gallicanism and ideas of rebellion against what they term the despotism of the bishops."

"To obviate that," replied the cardinal, harshly, "the bishops must redouble their severity, and never forget that they were Romans before they were Frenchmen; for in France they represent Rome, the Holy Father, and the interests of the church, as an ambassador represents, in a foreign land, his country, his master, and the interests of his nation."

"That is undeniably true," said the Abbé d'Aigrigny. "So let us hope that, thanks to the vigorous impulse which your eminence gives to the episcopate, we shall at length obtain the power of imparting instruction. Then, instead of young Frenchmen infected with philosophy and absurd patriotism, we shall have good, obedient,

well-disciplined Roman Catholics, who will become thus the respected subjects of our Holy Father."

"And so, in a given time," added the Belgian bishop, with a smile, "if our Holy Father was willing, I suppose, to free the Catholics of France from their obedience to the existing temporal power, he might, on recognising some other power, assure to it a considerable and perfectly constituted Catholic party."

So saying, the bishop again wiped his brow, and sought a little Siberia from the depths of one of the vessels filled with iced chocolate.

"Moreover, a power always shows itself grateful for such a gift," said the princess, smiling in her turn, "and then concedes great immunities to the church."

"And thus the church resumes the place it ought to occupy, and which, unfortunately, it no longer occupies in France in these times of impiety and anarchy," said the cardinal. "Fortunately, in my way hither, I have seen a good many prelates, whose lukewarmness I have reproved, and whose zeal I have rekindled; enjoining them, in the name of the Holy Father, to attack openly and boldly the liberty of the press and the freedom of worships, although they are recognised by abominable revolutionary laws."

"Alas! your eminence has not then retreated in the face of these terrible dangers — before the cruel martyrdoms to which our prelates will be exposed in obeying you?" said the princess, gaily. "And those redoubtable appeals against abuses, — if your eminence should reside in France, you would assail the laws of the country, as they are called by the race of lawyers and members of Parliament. Lack, what a terrible affair! The Council of State would declare that there was an abuse in your mandate. Monseigneur, there would be an abuse! Your eminence will understand how frightful a thing it is for a prince of the church, when seated on his pontifical throne, surrounded by his dignitaries and his chapter, to

hear, at a distance, some dozen of atheistical bureaucrats, in black and blue livery, crying at the top of their lungs, from the falsetto to the bass, 'There is an abuse! There is an abuse!' Really, if there be any abuse at all, it is the abuse of the ridiculous with such people."

This pleasantry on the part of the princess was hailed with general hilarity.

The Belgian bishop next spoke:

"I find that these fierce defenders of the laws, whilst they play the braggadocio, act with a perfectly Christian humility. A prelate rudely reproves their impiety, and they modestly reply, whilst they make a lowly reverence, 'Ah, monseigneur, there is an abuse!'"

Fresh bursts of laughter hailed this pleasantry.

"We must let them amuse themselves with these innocent cries of scholars annoyed by the sharp ferule of the master," said the cardinal, smiling. "We shall be always amongst them in spite of themselves, and against themselves. In the first place, because we consider their eternal welfare more than they themselves do; and, then, because the powers that be will always have need of us to give them weight, and to bridle the populace. Moreover, whilst the advocates and parliamentary men, and university atheists, utter cries of impotent hatred and malice, really Christian souls come into collision, and unite against impiety. In my way through Lyons I was deeply affected. Ah, that is a really Roman city, brotherhoods, penitents, all kinds of charities — nothing is wanting; and, what is better than all, there is a donation to the clergy yearly of not less than three hundred thousand crowns (36,000*l.*). Ah, Lyons is the worthy capital of Catholic France. Three hundred thousand crowns, a donation, that's the way to choke impiety! Three hundred thousand crowns a year! What will the philosophers say to that?"

"Unfortunately, monseigneur," replied the Père d'Aigrigny, "all the cities of France do not resemble

Lyons. I must even inform your eminence that a very grave fact is manifest. Some number of the lower clergy pretend to make common cause with the populace, whose poverty and privations they share, and are ready to protest, in the name of evangelical equality, against what they call the aristocratic despotism of the bishops."

"If it were possible they could be guilty of such audacity," cried the cardinal, "there would be no species of interdiction, no punishment too severe to inflict for such rebellious conduct."

"They have even gone beyond this conduct, daring as it may seem to your eminence. Some among them have even ventured to get up a schism, and to demand that the French Church should be entirely separated from that of Rome, under the pretext that ultramontanism has perverted and corrupted the primitive purity of the doctrines of Christ. A young priest, who was first a missionary, then a country curate, named Gabriel de Rennepont, has made himself the centre of a species of Propaganda. He has assembled several of the clergy of the neighbouring parishes, and while recommending the most implicit obedience to their bishops so long as things remain as they now are in the existent hierarchy, he still exhorted them to avail themselves of their rights, as citizens of France, to accomplish legitimately what he is pleased to call the freedom of the lower clergy; for, according to his assertions, the priests of parishes are solely at the mercy of their bishops, who may place them under interdict, and deprive them of their means of subsistence, without power of appealing from their decision." [1]

"Why, this young man must be a sort of Catholic Luther," said the bishop.

[1] An ecclesiastic, as honourable as honoured, has related to us the fact of a poor young parish priest, who, placed under an interdict by his bishop, without any assignable cause, and reduced almost to the last stage of want and misery, was compelled to go (of course concealing his sacred profession) as waiter at a café at Lille, in which establishment his brother was also similarly employed.

And walking tiptoe towards the buffet, the pious and much-shocked prelate helped himself to a brimming glass of Madeira, into which he slowly dipped a marchpane formed in the shape of an Episcopal cross.

Encouraged by this example, the cardinal, under pretext of warming his still cold feet, approached the fire, thought fit to present himself with a glass of rare old Malaga, which he gulped down with an air of profound meditation, after which he resumed:

"Then it appears that this said Abbé Gabriel sets himself up for a reformer? He must be an ambitious spirit. Pray is he likely to be dangerous?"

"Acting upon our advice, he has been so deemed by our superiors, who have ordered him to repair hither; he will be here directly, and I will briefly state to your eminence wherefore I have caused him to be summoned. But, previously, I wish to show you some notes, which will explain and expose the dangerous turn of the Abbé Gabriel's ideas. The following questions have been put to him in writing, touching several of his actions, and it is in consequence of the nature of his replies that his superiors have recalled him."

So saying, the Abbé d'Aigrigny took from his pocket-book a paper, which he read aloud. It was as follows:

"Question.—'Is it true that you have performed the last solemn duties to an inhabitant of your parish, who, after having lived in a state of vile and hardened impenitence, finished his guilty career by committing suicide?'

"Reply of the Abbé Gabriel:

"'I did perform the last religious rites, because, by reason of his former sinful life, the unfortunate deceased had more need than other men of the prayers of the Church; and, during the night which followed his interment, I unceasingly supplicated the mercy of God for him.'

"Question.—'Is it true that you refused certain vases of vermeil, and sundry other ornamental gifts,

which certain of your parishioners, obeying the dictates of a pious zeal, wished to present to the church over which you preside?'

"Reply.—'I refused the vermeil vases, and other decorative offerings, because the house of the Lord should be simple and unostentatious, in order that the faithful may ever be reminded that the divine Saviour was born in a stable; and I prevailed on the persons who were desirous of making such useless presents to the parish, rather to employ their money in judicious acts of charity, assuring them it would go much further in promoting the glory of the Lord.'"

"Upon my word," exclaimed the cardinal; "here we have a violent and intemperate denunciation against the decorating of our places of worship! This young priest is a highly dangerous person; but I pray you, my dear father, to continue your notes."

And excited by his zealous indignation, his eminence swallowed sundry strawberry-puffs with desperate eagerness.

D'Aigrigny thus resumed:

"Question.—'Is it true that you have received into your vicarage, and nursed and tended, for several days, an inhabitant of the village, a Swiss by birth, and a member of the Protestant faith? Is it true that, not only you used no efforts to convert him to the Catholic Apostolic and Romish religion, but that you carried your utter disregard of your duties so far as to bury this heretic in the consecrated ground appropriated for the reception of such as die in our holy communion?'

"Reply.—'A fellow creature and a brother was without shelter. His life had been passed in honest industry. Too old to labour, he was attacked by severe illness. When almost in a dying state he was turned out-of-doors by a pitiless landlord, to whom he owed a twelvemonth's rent. I received the worn out old man into my house. I whispered peace and hope in the few

last days of his life. The poor creature had known nothing but sorrow, hard labour, and privations all his life; but never, even up to his dying hour, did he murmur against his hard lot, but, humbly commending his soul to God, and reverentially kissing the blessed cross, his guileless and contented spirit resigned itself unto him who gave it. I closed his eyes with the respect I would have shown a monarch; myself committed him to the grave; and, notwithstanding he had died in the Protestant faith, I deemed him worthy of a place in our burial-ground.'"

"Better and better," said the cardinal. "This is, indeed, tolerance of a most monstrous description, and a decided and horrible attack against a maxim which comprises the whole force of Catholicism, There is no salvation save for those within the pale of our holy church!"

"These things become so much the more serious, my lord," replied D'Aigrigny, "from the universal enthusiasm excited by the mildness, charity, and Christian devotion of the Abbé Gabriel; a feeling which is not confined to his own parish, but extends equally to the surrounding districts. The clergy of the neighbouring parishes have yielded to the general excitement, and, certainly, but for the extreme humility and moderation of the young priest, Gabriel, a very formidable schism would commence."

"But what is your motive," asked the prelate, "in bringing the Abbé Gabriel before us at the present moment?"

"In the first place, the position of the Abbé Gabriel is one of considerable complexity. Primarily as regards his being heir to the Rennepont family."

"But he has formally renounced his claims — has he not?" demanded the cardinal.

"He has, my lord; and this renunciation, at first invalid for want of due form, has been lately duly and

legally secured, it must be admitted, by his own full and unhesitating consent, he having solemnly vowed, whatever might befall himself, to abandon all claims to the Rennepont property in favour of the company of Jesus. Nevertheless, his reverence, Father Rodin, suggested that it would perhaps be as well if your eminence would see the Abbé Gabriel, and, first pointing out to him that his superiors were about to recall him in disgrace, offer him a distinguished position in Rome. We should probably succeed in inducing him to quit France, and thereby awaken in him those sentiments of ambition which, doubtless, merely slumber within him; for, as your eminence very judiciously observed, every reformer either is or should be ambitious."

"I approve of the suggestion," returned the cardinal, after a short pause; "with his rare qualifications, and the extreme influence he seems capable of acquiring over the minds of men, the Abbé Gabriel might easily arrive at considerable distinction in the church, if he be docile; and if he be not, why, it is better for the safety of the church he should be at Rome than here, for at Rome we have, as you are aware, my well-beloved brother, certain modes of compelling duty and obedience which, unfortunately, France does not possess."[1]

After a moment's reflection, the cardinal suddenly said to D'Aigrigny:

"Since we are speaking of Rodin, tell me candidly what is your opinion of him?"

"Your eminence is aware of his great ability," said D'Aigrigny, with an air of mingled restraint and distrust. "Our reverend Father-General —"

"Has commissioned him to supersede you," said the cardinal. "I know that, the reverend Father-General told me of it in Rome; but I want to have your opinion of the natural disposition of this Rodin. Do you con-

[1] It is well known that, at the present day (1845), the Inquisition, with its imprisonment *in pace*, etc., still exists in Rome.

sider that he is a person to repose unlimited confidence in?"

"He is, indeed, one of those self-contained, decided, secret, and impenetrable characters," answered D'Aigrigny, hesitatingly, "respecting whom it is really impossible to arrive at any certain conclusion.

"Do you believe him to be ambitious?" pursued the cardinal, after another pause. "Do you not think it probable he has other objects in what he does than the sole desire to promote the welfare and great glory of his Order? I tell you," continued the cardinal, significantly, "I have powerful reasons for putting the question to you."

"But," replied D'Aigrigny, not without mistrust, — for between persons mutually suspicious of the other's good faith, it is ever requisite to proceed cautiously, — "what does your eminence think respecting him, either from your own observation or in consequence of what you may have heard from the reverend Father-General?"

"Why, indeed, my impression is that if any sinister views are concealed beneath his great apparent devotion to his Order, it is needful they should be discovered at any price, for, with the powerful influence he has for some time past created for himself at Rome, and which I have discovered, he might one day, and that not far off, become really formidable."

"And I," exclaimed D'Aigrigny, carried away by his jealousy of Rodin, "am entirely of the same opinion as your eminence, for I have occasionally observed in him flashes of ambition, as threatening as vast and unbounded, and, therefore, I will frankly say, since your eminence desires to know my inmost thoughts concerning him —"

D'Aigrigny was unable to proceed, for at this moment Madame Grivois, having first tapped at the door, half opened it, and made a sign to her mistress, who replied to her by an inclination of the head.

Madame Grivois then disappeared, and immediately afterwards Rodin entered the salon.

CHAPTER VII.

THE BALANCE SHEET.

At the sight of Rodin, the two prelates and the Père d'Aigrigny rose spontaneously, so imposing was the real superiority of this man; whilst their countenances, but now contracted by mistrust and jealousy, suddenly expanded, and seemed to smile at the reverend *père* with extreme deference, whilst the princess advanced several paces towards him.

Rodin, as usual, wretchedly clad, leaving on the soft carpet the muddy prints of his thick shoes, put down his umbrella in a corner, and approached the table, not with his accustomed humility, but with a deliberate tread; his head erect, his look assured, not only as if he felt himself amongst his own party, but as if he had the consciousness of ruling amongst them by the enlightenment of his understanding.

"We were speaking of your reverence, my very dear *père*," said the cardinal, with excessive affability.

"Ah!" said Rodin, looking steadfastly at the prelate, "and what were you saying?"

"Why," said the Belgian bishop, wiping his forehead, "all the good one can say of your reverence."

"Will you not take something, my very dear *père?*" said the princess to Rodin, and pointing to the splendid buffet.

"Thanks, madame; but I have had my radish this morning."

"My secretary, the Abbé Berlini, who was present at your morning meal, has edified me exceedingly on your reverence's frugality," said the prelate; "it is, indeed, worthy of an anchorite."

"Suppose we talk of business?" said Rodin, abruptly, and like a man used to control and take a lead in discussion.

"We are always delighted to hear you," said the prelate. "Your reverence appointed this day yourself to talk over and discuss this great Rennepont affair,—so great, indeed, that it is one of the main objects of my journey to France. For to sustain the interest of the most glorious company of Jesus, with which I have the honour to be affiliated, is to sustain the interests of Rome; and I have promised the reverend Father-General that I will place myself entirely under your orders."

"I can only repeat what his eminence has said," added the bishop. "Quitting Rome together, our views and ideas are precisely similar."

"Assuredly," said Rodin, addressing himself to the cardinal, "your eminence can serve our cause, and materially. I will presently show you in what way." Then, addressing the princess, "I have sent to Doctor Baleinier to come here, madame; for it will be right to instruct him on certain points."

"He will be admitted as usual," said the princess.

Since Rodin's arrival, Père d'Aigrigny had kept silence. He appeared to be deeply immersed in thought; and, as if undergoing a severe internal struggle, at length he half rose from his seat, and said, in a soft voice, in which an expression of vexation was yet audible, addressing the prelate:

"I have no intention of asking your eminence to be the judge between his reverence the Père Rodin and myself. Our general has spoken, and I have obeyed. But, your eminence being about to return speedily to our superior, I could wish if you would so far favour

me that you would faithfully report the replies of his reverence the Père Rodin to certain questions."

The prelate bowed.

Rodin looked at the Père d'Aigrigny with an astonished air, and said to him, dryly:

"It is already decided; what is the use of any further questionings?"

"Not with any desire or design of vindicating myself," replied the Père d'Aigrigny; "but that the precise state of things may come before his eminence's eyes."

"Well, then, go on; but pray do not let us have any useless waste of words," said Rodin, drawing out his large silver watch, which he looked at, and then added, "I must be at St. Sulpice at two o'clock."

"I will be as brief as possible," said Père d'Aigrigny, with repressed resentment; and then, resuming, he addressed Rodin, "When your reverence thought proper to substitute your control to mine, blaming, too severely perhaps, the manner in which I had directed the interests which had been confided to me, those interests, I frankly confess, had been utterly compromised."

"Compromised!" interrupted Rodin, ironically; "say at once, destroyed; for you ordered me to write to Rome, and say that all hope must now be renounced."

"That is the truth," said Père d'Aigrigny.

"Then it was a dying man given over — abandoned by the best physician," continued Rodin, with irony, "whom I have undertaken to restore to life. Go on."

And, thrusting his two hands in the pockets of his trousers, he looked the Père d'Aigrigny full in the face.

"Your reverence bitterly upbraided me," continued the Père d'Aigrigny, "but for having sought, by all possible means, to recover the property most shamefully pilfered from our company."

"All your casuists authorise you completely and properly," said the cardinal; "the opinions are clear and decided, and you have the perfect right to recover, *per*

fas aut nefas, property of which you have been traitorously despoiled."

"Thus, then," continued the Père d'Aigrigny, "his highness the Père Rodin only reproached me with the military brutality of my means, their violence in dangerous discordance, as he remarked, with the manners of the times. True; but, in the first place, I was not in any way legally the object of any prosecution; in the next, but for a circumstance of unprecedented fatality, success must have crowned the measures I had pursued, however coarse and severe they might have been. Now, may I inquire of your reverence what you —"

"What I have done more than you did?" said Rodin to Père d'Aigrigny, giving way to his insolent habit of interruption. "What I have done better than you? What steps I have pursued in the Rennepont affair after I took it out of your hands, who had forsaken it in despair? Is that what you wish to know?"

"Precisely," said the Père d'Aigrigny, dryly.

"Well, then, I'll tell you," replied Rodin, in a sardonic tone; "as many great, clumsy, coarse things as you have done, so many small, childish, secret things have I done! Yes, I, who have dared to call myself a man of extended views, you cannot imagine the silly game I have been engaged in for the last six weeks."

"I should never have allowed myself to address such a reproach to your reverence, however much I might have deemed it merited," said the Père d'Aigrigny, with a bitter smile.

"A reproach?" said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders, —"a reproach? Your judgment has been decided upon. Do you know what I wrote of you six weeks ago? It was, 'The Père d'Aigrigny has excellent qualities, and will serve me materially.' From to-morrow I shall employ you most actively," said Rodin, parenthetically. "'But,' I added, 'he is not sufficiently great

to know how to make himself occasionally little.' Do you understand?"

"Not very clearly," said Père d'Aigrigny, turning very red.

"So much the worse for you," continued Rodin; "for it proves I was correct. Well, then, since I must tell you; I have had wit enough to play the silliest game in the world for the last six weeks. Yes, such as you see me, I have played the amiable with a grisette; I have talked of progress, humanity, liberty, emancipation of women, with a young girl whose head is turned; I have talked of the great Napoleon and the Buonapartist mania with a worn-out old soldier; I have talked of the imperial glory, the humiliation of France, the hopes of the King of Rome, with a gallant man, a marshal of France, who, if he has a heart full of adoration for that stealer of crowns, who was considered a felon at St. Helena, has a head which is as hollow and empty as a trumpet. Blow into this brainless tube a few warlike or patriotic notes, and, lo, he has made fantasies without knowing for whom, for what, or how. *Ma foi!* this is not all! I have talked over love-passages with a young, wild tiger. I tell you that it was really lamentable to see a man with some brains lower himself in the scale of humanity, as I have done; humble himself to collect, as I have done, the thousand and one small threads which belong to the ravelled skein of this intricate plot! A glorious sight, is it not, to see the spider spin his web so toilsomely, — fastening this one, altering that, letting out others? How interesting to see the vile, small, black animal at his patient work! You shrug your shoulders! Be it so; but come back in two hours, and what do you see? The little black animal fully gorged, fed up to his throat, and in his web a dozen silly flies, so entangled, so fettered that the little black animal has only to choose at his pleasure the hour and moment for his feeding."

As he said these words, Rodin smiled singularly; his eyes, usually half hidden by his flaccid eyelids, were widely distended, and seemed to glow with unusual ardour. The Jesuit had felt within him for some moments a sort of feverish excitement, which he attributed to the struggle he was maintaining before those eminent personages who were already under the influence of his original and emphatic mode of discourse.

The Père d'Aigrigny began to repent having commenced this contest; however, with ill-repressed irony, he remarked:

"I do not dispute the smallness of your means employed; I agree with you that they are very puerile, extremely commonplace; they are not sufficient to inspire me with a very elevated opinion of your merits. I shall therefore take leave to ask you —"

"What those small means produced?" interrupted Rodin, with an excitement by no means usual with him. "Look, then, at my spider's web, and you will see that young and insolent girl, so proud six weeks since of her loveliness, her intelligence, her boldness, at this moment pale, dejected, and mortally wounded to the very heart."

"But that trait of chivalric intrepidity of the Indian prince with which all Paris was moved," said the princess, "Mlle. de Cardoville must have been touched by that!"

"Yes; but I paralysed the effect of that stupid and wild devotion, by showing the young girl that it was not sufficient to kill black panthers, in order to prove oneself a sensitive, delicate, and faithful lover."

"True," said Père d'Aigrigny, "this is a gain; for Mlle. de Cardoville is wounded to the heart."

"But what results from this for the interests of the Rennepont affair?" inquired the cardinal, with curiosity, and putting his elbows on the table.

"In the first place, it results," replied Rodin, "that

the most dangerous enemy we can have is severely wounded, and leaves the field of battle; I think that is something!"

"No doubt," said the princess, "the mind and daring of Mlle. de Cardoville might have formed the soul of a coalition directed against us."

"True," added Père d'Aigrigny, obstinately; "in this sense we need no longer to be feared, and that is an advantage; but this wound in the heart will not preclude her from inheriting."

"Who tells you so?" asked Rodin, with calm assurance.

"Do you know why I did so much to bring her and Djalma together in the first instance, in spite of herself, and afterwards to separate them in spite of herself?"

"I should like to know," said Père d'Aigrigny, "how this storm of passions will prevent Mlle. de Cardoville and the prince from inheriting?"

"Is it from the calm sky or the stormy sky that proceeds the lightning which dazzles and strikes?" said Rodin, in a haughty tone. "Be easy; I know where to place the conductor. As to M. Hardy, that man lived for three things, — his workmen, a friend, and a mistress! He has received three arrows straight in his heart. I always aim at the heart. I fired it right and sure."

"It is right, and sure, and praiseworthy," said the bishop; "for, if I have heard aright, this manufacturer had a concubine, and it is well to make a wicked passion serve for the weapon to strike the offender."

"That is palpable," added the cardinal; "they have wicked propensities; we make use of them; it is their fault."

"Our holy mother Perpétue," chimed in the princess, "has used all means in her power to discover the whole of this abominable adultery!"

"So, then, we have M. Hardy smitten in his tenderest affections."

"I admit," said Père d'Aigrigny, yielding his ground only inch by inch, "he is smitten in his fortune, but that will only make him the more eager in his pursuit of this vast inheritance."

This argument appeared serious to the two prelates and the princess, who all looked at Rodin with intense curiosity. He, instead of making any reply, went towards the buffet, and, contrary to his usual habit of stoic sobriety, in spite of his repugnance for wine, looked at the decanters and said:

"What is in these?"

"Bordeaux and sherry," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, much surprised at Rodin's sudden taste.

He took up a decanter haphazard, poured out a glass of Madeira, and drank it off at a draught. For some moments he had felt himself seized all over with a sudden and strange shuddering, which had been followed by a sort of faintness, which he trusted the wine would overcome.

After having wiped his lips with the back of his dirty hand, he returned to the table, and, addressing the Père d'Aigrigny, said:

"What did you desire to know with respect to M. Hardy?"

"Why, being injured in his fortune, he will only be the more eager after this immense inheritance," replied the Père d'Aigrigny, internally enraged at the imperious tone of his superior.

"M. Hardy think of money?" said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders. "Does he think of anything? Every hope is destroyed within him. Indifferent to the things of this world, he is plunged in a stupor, which he only quits for paroxysms of tears; then he talks with mechanical kindness to those who surround him with the utmost care (I have placed him in excellent hands), and now he begins to show himself sensible to the tender commiseration which is unremittingly testified towards

him, for he is good, excellent, — as excellent as weak; and it is to this excellence that I shall direct your attention, Père d'Aigrigny, in order that you may work out what is left to do."

"I?" inquired Père d'Aigrigny, greatly astonished.

"Yes; and then you will see if the result I have obtained is not considerable, and — "

Again interrupting himself, Rodin passed his hand over his brow, saying to himself, "This is strange!"

"What ails you?" inquired the princess, with interest.

"Nothing, madame," replied Rodin, with a shudder; "it is no doubt the wine I have drunk. I am not accustomed to it, and I feel my head rather uncomfortable, — but it will soon go off."

"Indeed, my dear *père*, your eyes look very much inflamed," said the princess.

"That is because I havé looked too intently at my web," resumed the Jesuit, with his sinister smile, "and I must examine it again, in order to clear the eyesight of Père d'Aigrigny, who seems near-sighted. My other flies, — the two daughters of General Simon, for instance, — from day to day more sad, more dejected, as they feel a barrier of ice rise up between them and the maréchal. And he, since his father's death, you should see, hear, how he is torn, distracted by opposing thoughts; to-day believing himself dishonoured if he does this, to-morrow disgraced if he does it not; this soldier, this hero of the empire, is now more weak, more irresolute than a child. Who, then, remains of this impious family? Jacques Rennepont! Ask Morok into what state of insanity dissipation has thrown the poor wretch, and towards what abyss he is hastening! This is my balance sheet, — this is the state of isolation, desolation, into which, at this moment, the members of this family are plunged, they who would have combined but six weeks since so many powerful, energetic, and dangerous elements, if they had but been united! Such are they now,

— these Renneponts, who, by the advice of their heretical ancestor, were to concentrate their powers to combat and crush us; and they were greatly to be dreaded. What did I say? Why, that I would act upon their passions. What have I done? I have acted on their passions; and therefore it is at this moment that they struggle in my toils, which enclose them on all sides. They are mine, I tell you, — they are mine."

For some moments, and whilst he spoke, Rodin's physiognomy and voice underwent a singular change; his complexion, usually so cadaverous, became more and more flushed, but unequally, and, as it were, in streaks; then, strange phenomenon! his eyes, becoming more and more glaring, seemed to grow more hollow, whilst his voice sounded broken, harsh, and tremulous.

The alteration in Rodin's features, of which he did not appear in the least conscious, was so striking, that the other actors in this scene looked at him with a kind of fear.

Mistaking the cause of their looks, Rodin, indignant, exclaimed in a voice occasionally interrupted by spasms of deep and impeded breathing:

"Is it pity for this impious race that I read in your countenance? Pity for a young girl who never sets foot in a church, and raises heathen altars in her own residence? Pity for M. Hardy, a sentimental blasphemer, a philanthropic atheist, who had not a chapel in his factory, and dared to place the names of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and Plato beside that of our Saviour, who called Jesus the divine philosopher? Pity for this Indian of the sect of Brahma? Pity for these two sisters, who have not received the rite of baptism? Pity for that brute Jacques Rennepont? Pity for that stupid imperial soldier, who has Napoleon for his God, and for his Gospel the bulletins of the *grande armée?* Pity for this family of renegades, whose ancestor, a relapsed heretic, not content with having robbed us of our prop-

erty, still from the depths of his tomb excites his accursed race to raise its head against us after a century and a half? What! to defend ourselves from these vipers, have we not a right to crush them in the venom which they themselves have distilled? And I tell you, I, that it is serving God, it is giving a wholesome example, to devote, in the face of all, and by the very workings of their own passions, this impious family to agony — despair — death!"

Rodin was frightful in his fierceness as he thus spoke, — the glare of his eyes became even more ardent, his lips were dry and parched, a cold sweat was on his brow, and his temples beat convulsively, whilst renewed chill shudderings pervaded his entire frame. Ascribing his increasing suffering to overfatigue, for he had been writing during the greater portion of the night, and desirous of preventing a renewal of his weakness, he went to the sideboard, poured out another glass of wine, which he swallowed at a draught, and returned to the table at the moment when the cardinal was saying:

"If the steps you are taking with regard to this family had any need of justification, my very dear father, you would have gloriously justified it by your last words; not only according to the casuists, I repeat, are you entirely in the right, but there is nothing reprehensible even according to the laws of the world; as to divine laws, it is pleasing to the Lord to contend against and overthrow the impious with the weapons which they themselves furnish."

Overcome as well as the rest by the devilish assurance of Rodin, and impelled to a sort of fearful admiration, the Père d'Aigrigny said to him:

"I confess I was wrong to doubt your reverence's mind. Deceived as to the means you have employed, considering them in detached parts, I could not judge of their redoubtable combination, and especially of the

results which they have actually produced. Now I see that, thanks to you, success is no longer doubtful."

"And this is an exaggeration," replied Rodin, with feverish impatience. "All these passions are at this moment boiling, but the moment is very critical, and as the alchemist bends over his crucible, in which boils a mixture which may give him treasure or death, I alone can at this juncture — "

Rodin could not finish, but raised his two hands suddenly to his head and uttered a low cry of stifled pain.

"What ails you?" said Père d'Aigrigny, "for the last few minutes you have become dreadfully pale."

"I do not know what is the matter with me," said Rodin, in an altered voice, "my headache increases, and a sort of vertigo has made me very giddy for a moment."

"Sit down," said the princess, in a tone of interest.

"Take something," added the bishop.

"It is nothing," continued Rodin, making a strong effort over himself; "thank God I am not made of down. I slept but little during the night — it is fatigue — nothing more. I was saying that I alone can direct this affair at this crisis, but not execute it. I must disappear, to watch incessantly in obscurity, where I shall hold all the threads which I — I alone can manage," added Rodin, in an oppressed voice.

"My very dear father," said the cardinal, with uneasiness, "I am sure you are seriously unwell; your cheeks are becoming quite livid."

"Possibly," replied Rodin, courageously; "but I do not give way to trifles. Let us return to our business. Now is the moment, Père d'Aigrigny, when your qualities — and you have great ones, I have never disputed or denied — can come to me with great effect. You have a winning way, an attractive demeanour, and seductive eloquence. It will be requisite."

Rodin paused again. His brow was streaming with

chill perspiration, he felt his limbs give way under him, and he said, in spite of his energetic obstinacy:

"I confess it, I do not feel well; yet this morning I was as well as usual. I tremble in spite of myself; I am icy cold."

"Come nearer the fire; it is a sudden attack," said the bishop, offering him his arm with heroic devotion. "It will not be anything of consequence."

"If you would take something warm to drink, — a cup of tea," said the princess. "M. Baleinier will, fortunately, be here very soon, and he will make us easy as to this indisposition."

"Really it is inexplicable," said the prelate.

At these words of the cardinal, Rodin, who had approached the fire in great agony, turned his eyes towards the prelate and looked at him fixedly for a second in a singular manner, then, strong in his indomitable energy, in spite of the alteration of his features, which were visibly and materially changing, Rodin said, in a broken voice, which he endeavoured to render firm:

"The fire has somewhat warmed me; it will be nothing. *Ma foi!* I have time, certainly, to be nursed and cosseted. How apropos it would be to fall sick at this crisis of the Rennepont affair, which can only succeed by and through me alone! Let us, therefore, return to business. I tell you, Père d'Aigrigny, that you can very materially serve us; and you, also, Madame la Princesse, for you have espoused this cause as if it were your own; and — "

Rodin paused again. This time he uttered a piercing cry, fell back in a chair near him, threw himself back in it convulsively, and pressing his two hands against his chest, cried:

"Oh, how I suffer!"

And immediately, to the fearful alteration already spread over the features of Rodin, succeeded a cadaverous hue, covering the countenance in an instant with the

ghastly pallor of a corpse in which decomposition has already commenced; his eyes, already sunken in his head, were rigid and injected with blood, while they seemed to retreat into their very orbits, whose darkened shadow formed a black hollow ring around the red glowing eyeballs; violent spasmodic pangs tore his entrails and contracted the hard features of his bony countenance. To these acute pains succeeded a collapse, which, releasing the skin from tension, left it flaccid, damp, and covered with a cold sweat like that of death, while a hideous tinge of green mingled with the corpse-like colour the face had before exhibited; from his lips, which were rigid and convulsed by the dire torments he underwent, escaped a breathing, hot, fetid and gasping, mingled with continual groans, and cries of, "Oh, what I suffer! What torture is this? I burn — I die!"

Then, impelled by a fresh paroxysm of pain, Rodin, almost maddened, tore his naked breast with the points of his sharp nails, for he had early torn off the buttons of his waistcoat, and ripped open his soiled and greasy shirt-front, as though the pressure of his garments increased the violence of the sufferings under which he writhed.

The bishop, the cardinal, and Father d'Aigrigny rushed towards Rodin to tender their assistance. At that instant he was seized with fresh convulsions, and, all at once collecting his strength, he rose up on his feet stiff and rigid as a corpse; then, his dress disordered, his thin gray hair standing like bristles around his distorted visage, green with all the sickening colours of the charnel-house, and fixing his red and glaring eyes upon the cardinal, who at this instant was stooping over him, he grasped him with his convulsed fingers, and with a fearful tone he cried, in a half suffocated voice:

"Cardinal Malipieri, this illness is too sudden — I am mistrusted at Rome — you come of the race of Borgia, and your secretary was with me this morning."

"Unhappy man!" exclaimed the prelate, as thunderstruck as indignant at this accusation. "What does he mean by words like these?"

And, so speaking, the cardinal sought to free himself from the tight grasp of the Jesuit, whose stiffening fingers closed upon him with the tenacity of iron.

"I have been poisoned!" murmured Rodin. Then relapsing into utter exhaustion, he sunk back into the arms of Father d'Aigrigny.

Spite of his terror, the cardinal had time to whisper in a low tone to D'Aigrigny:

"He fancies that we wish to poison him; he is, therefore, conscious of being engaged in some dangerous machinations against us!"

The door of the salon opened at this juncture and admitted Doctor Baleinier.

"Ah, doctor," exclaimed the princess, running, pale and terrified, to meet him, "how thankful I am for your presence! Father Rodin has just been suddenly attacked with the most frightful convulsions. Pray, pray, hasten to his succour."

"Convulsions! Oh, that is nothing, madame. Be under no alarm, I beg," said the doctor, throwing his hat on a chair, and hurrying towards the group who surrounded the dying man.

"Here is the doctor!" cried the princess. And as M. Baleinier approached, all drew aside, except D'Aigrigny, who was supporting Rodin, who had sunk almost lifeless in a chair.

"Gracious Heavens!" exclaimed Doctor Baleinier, examining the countenance of Rodin (which from green was becoming of a bluish hue) with increasing alarm, "what fearful symptoms are these?"

"What is the matter?" inquired all the spectators in a voice.

"The matter!" replied the doctor, stepping backwards as though he had trodden on a serpent; "the sick-

ness which has seized upon Father Rodin is spasmodic cholera, which carries death and contagion with it!"

At these fatal sounds D'Aigrigny let go his hold of Rodin, who sank from the chair on which he was partly reclining on to the floor.

"He is a dead man!" cried Doctor Baleinier; "still I will go in search of what alone can be employed as a last effort to save him."

And with these words he rushed towards the door, so quickly followed by the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, Father d'Aigrigny, the bishop, and cardinal, that, all precipitating themselves towards the same point, the confusion became so great that not one among them could manage to open the door.

An unseen hand at length opened it from without, and Gabriel appeared, the type of all that is holy, sincere, pure-minded, and heavenly in a priest, — such a one as would, indeed, merit the universal respect, admiration, and tenderest sympathy of all mankind, his divine countenance and angelic calmness contrasting strangely with the terrified, fear-stricken countenances of the agitated beings by whom he was surrounded. Ere, however, the young man could understand the cause of all this alarm, he was all but thrown down by the fugitives, who swept by him, exclaiming:

"Enter not! Fly, fly, — save yourself! He is dying of cholera!"

At these words, and pushing the bishop, who was last in the flying party, back into the salon, Gabriel flew onwards to Rodin, while the bishop, thankful to be freed from any further interruption to his flight, once more made for the door, and availed himself of the free egress left him by the entrance of Gabriel to rush after his companions.

Rodin, meanwhile, lay writhing in fearful agonies on the carpet, his limbs distorted by the most dreadful cramps, and his frame shaken by direful spasmodic

throes. His fall had probably recalled his wandering recollection, for he murmured forth in a sepulchral voice:

"They have left me, then, to die like a dog! Oh, cowards! Help, help! Alas, no one comes!"

And as the dying man lay prostrate on the ground, he, by a convulsive movement, contrived to raise himself on one elbow, and, casting his hideous looks towards the ceiling, while his eyes glared with mingled fury and desperation, he cried again in utter desolation of spirit, "No, no one will approach me, none, none!"

But at this instant his fierce and glaring glances encountered the large blue eyes and mild heavenly countenance of Gabriel, who, kneeling beside him, said, in his usual sweet, yet serious voice:

"I am here, father, ready to succour and assist you, if, indeed, earthly aid be yet available; or to offer up my prayers for you and with you, should it be the Lord's pleasure to call you hence!"

"Gabriel!" uttered Rodin, faintly. "Pardon — for the wrong — I have done you. Pity me — and do not abandon me! Do not —"

The wretched man could proceed no further; he uttered a shrill cry of sharp agony, his strength utterly forsook him, and he fell extended on the floor, speechless and motionless.

In the evening papers of that day was to be read the following announcement:

"The cholera is in Paris. The first case declared itself to-day at half-past three o'clock at the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier, Rue de Babylone."

PART XI.

THE CHOLERA

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FRONT OF NOTRE-DAME.

EIGHT days have elapsed since Rodin was smitten with the cholera, whose ravages continued to increase most alarmingly.

What a terrible period it was! A veil of mourning was spread over Paris, formerly so joyous. Yet never was the weather more delightful, the sky more blue and unchanging; never did the sun shine with greater radiance.

This inexorable serenity of nature, during the ravages of a deadly scourge, offered a strange and mysterious contrast.

The dazzling light of a brilliant sun rendered yet more visible the change of features caused by the thousand agonies of fear; for every one was aghast, — some for themselves, some for beloved connections; countenances betrayed an expression of disquiet, amaze, and feverishness; steps were hasty, as if by walking faster they had a chance of escaping the peril; and then, too, they were hurried, in order the more quickly to reach home. They left life, health, and happiness, in their dwellings, and two hours afterwards, on returning, they but too frequently found agony, despair, death.

At each moment new and sinister events struck the sight. Now there passed along the streets carts laden with coffins symmetrically piled up. They stopped at every door where men dressed in gray and black were standing; they extended their arms, and conveyed a

coffin, perhaps two, often three and four, into the same house, until the carts were exhausted, — and yet all the dead were not supplied.

In almost all the houses — from top to bottom, from bottom to top — there was a noise of hammers at work; they were nailing up the biers, and they nailed, and nailed, and nailed on, until at intervals the nailers stopped from exhaustion. Then, too, were heard all sorts of cries of grief, plaintive groans, and desperate imprecations there, when the men in gray and black had placed some in the biers.

Thus were they incessantly filling the biers, and nailing them down day and night — rather by day than by night; for, from the time of twilight, from want of sufficient hearses, there arrived a sad train of mortuary coaches, hastily prepared for the occasion, such as tumbrils, carts, vans, hackney-coaches, cars, in order to make up the funereal ceremonies; and, in contrast to the other vehicles, which arrived full and went away empty, they came empty and drove away full.

During this time the windows of the houses were lighted up, and the lights were kept on frequently during the day. It was the ball season, and these lights greatly resembled the luminous rays of the gay nights of festivities, only that consecrated candles filled the places of the wax-lights, and the psalmody of the prayers for the dead the joyous murmurs and echoes of the ball. Then, in the streets, instead of the transparent buffooneries of the better sort of macquerade dresses, there were suspended at distances lanterns with glasses of a blood-red colour, on which was inscribed, in black letters, "Succour for persons attacked by cholera."

Where there was really a fête was in the cemeteries during the night; there they were gay indeed! They, usually so dull, so mute, at the nocturnal hours, those silent hours, when the slightest sound of the cypress, moved by the night wind, is heard; they,

who never looked gay, but, perchance, when the pale rays of the moon played on the marble of the tombs; they, so solitary, that no human footstep dared, during the night season, to disturb their funeral silence, — they had suddenly become animated, noisy, full of bustle, and bright with light.

By the smoky glare of torches, which cast great red beams on the black firs and white stones of the sepulchres, a great number of grave-diggers worked, humming as they toiled. This dangerous and rude trade was then recompensed almost at the price of gold. They required so many of these good fellows, that it was requisite after all to take care of them. If they drank often, they drank much; if they always sang, they sang loud; and that in order to keep up their strength and good-humour, powerful auxiliaries in this rough toil. If some of them did not by misadventure complete the commenced grave, obliging companions finished it for them (that was the word), and laid them in it in all friendly feeling.

To the joyous strains of the grave-diggers were added other distant sounds. Public-houses had sprung up in the environs of the cemeteries; and the drivers of the dead, when they had once set down their passengers at their address, as they wittily and professionally said, those hearse-drivers, rich by the excessive payments now made to them, banqueted, feasted, like lords, and the dawn frequently surprised them with the glass in their hand and the obscene song on their lips. How strange is human nature! With these men of hearses and coffins, living in the very bowels of this scourge, mortality was almost a nullity!

In the dark and infected quarters of the city, where in the midst of a morbid atmosphere abide crowds of individuals already exhausted by the most severe privations, and as they said emphatically (*tout mâches*), all predisposed for the cholera, it was no longer a question of individuals, but of entire families carried off in a few

hours. Yet sometimes, by providential clemency, one or two young children remained alone in the cold and miserable chamber, after the father, mother, brother, and sister had gone away in their coffins.

Then they were often compelled to close, for want of lodgers, many of these houses, miserable hives of hard-working labourers, completely emptied in one day by the scourge, from the cellar (in which, according to immemorial custom, the little chimney-sweeps slept in straw) to the garrets, in which, half starved and half naked, was stretched on the ice-cold floor some unhappy wretch, without work and without bread.

Of all the quarters of Paris that which, during the period of the increase of the cholera, offered what was, perhaps, the most fearful spectacle, was the Quartier de la Cité; and, in the Cité, the façade of Notre-Dame was almost every day the theatre of terrible scenes, as the majority of the sick of the neighbouring streets, whom they were conveying to the Hôtel Dieu, were brought to this spot.

The cholera had not one physiognomy, — it had a thousand. Thus, eight days after Rodin had been suddenly attacked, several events in which the horrible mingled with the strange took place in the front of Notre-Dame.

Instead of the Rue d'Arcole, which now leads direct to this place, it was reached on one side by a squalid alley, like all the streets in the Cité, which was terminated by a dark and dilapidated arch. On entering into the square of the façade there was, on the left, the entrance of the vast cathedral, and in front, the building of the Hôtel Dieu. A little farther on, an opening allowed the parapet of the Quai Notre-Dame to be seen.

On the black and cracked wall of the arcade might be read a placard recently put up, on which was traced, by means of colour rubbed over letters cut in brass:[1]

[1] It is well known that during the cholera similar placards were profusely put up in Paris, and at various times ascribed to various persons; amongst others, to the priests, as several bishops had published orders, or had declared

"Vengeance! Vengeance! The people who are conveyed to the hospitals are poisoned there, because they find the numbers of sick too many. Every night boats filled with dead carcasses go down the Seine! Vengeance and death to the murderers of the people!"

Two men dressed in cloaks, and half hidden in the shade of the arch, listened with eager curiosity to a noise which grew more and more threatening, in the midst of a mob tumultuously assembled about the Hôtel Dieu.

Soon these cries, "Death to the doctors! Vengeance!" reached the ears of the men who were thus ensconced beneath the arcade.

"The placards do their work," said one of them; "the powder is in a blaze. Once rouse the populace, and we may direct them against whom we will."

"I say," said the other man, "look down there! That Hercules, whose enormous stature rises above all the rest of the mob, is not he one of those wild furies who was most active during the destruction of M. Hardy's factory?"

"*Pardieu!* yes; I recognise him. Whenever there is any mischief to be done, you find scoundrels of his kidney."

"My advice is, then, that we do not remain any longer," said the other man. "The wind is icy cold; and although I am cased in flannel —"

"You are right; the cholera is infernally brutal. Besides, all is well arranged on this side, and I am assured that a Republican *émeute* will burst out *en masse* in the Faubourg St. Antoine. It grows hotter and hotter, and works as we would wish it; and the holy cause of religion will triumph in spite of the revolutionary impiety. Let us go and join the Père d'Aigrigny!"

"Where shall we find him?"

"Here — close at hand. Come — come!"

in the churches of their diocese, that *le Bon Dieu* had sent the cholera to punish France for having driven away her legitimate kings, and assimilated the Catholic worship to other worships.

And the two individuals hastily disappeared.

The sun was beginning to set, and threw his golden beams on the black sculpture of the portal of Notre-Dame and the imposing mass of its two towers, which rose in the midst of a perfectly blue sky; and, for many days, a northeasterly wind, dry and chill, had swept away every appearance of a cloud.

A very dense mob had clustered, as we have said, in front of the Hôtel Dieu, close to the railing with which the peristyle of the hospital is surrounded, and behind which there was a picket of infantry drawn up, for the cries of "Death to the doctors!" had become still more threatening.

Those who made this clamour belonged to an idle, vagabond, corrupted class, the very dregs of Paris; and thus (and it was fearful) the poor creatures who were being carried to the hospital, being necessarily obliged to have the way forced through these hideous groups, entered the Hôtel Dieu amidst these sinister clamours and the cries of death.

At every moment litters and hand-barrows brought fresh victims. The litters, frequently covered with cotton curtains, concealed the sick; but those which had no coverings, from time to time the convulsive movements of the agonised sufferer removed the counterpane, and disclosed the cadaverous countenance.

Such sights, instead of frightening the wretches assembled in front of the hospital, only became the signal for brutal jests or atrocious predictions as to the fate of these unhappy creatures, when once in the doctor's power.

The quarrier and Ciboule, accompanied by many of these acolytes, were in the thickest of the crowd.

After the destruction of M. Hardy's factory, the quarrier, formally expelled from the companionship of the Loups, who would no longer have any connection with such a scoundrel, — the quarrier, from that moment, plunging into the lowest recesses of degrading infamy,

and speculating on his herculean strength, had become for pay the ostensible defender of Ciboule, and such as she.

Except some passers-by led by chance to the square of Notre-Dame, the ragged mob which filled it consisted of the vilest portion of the Parisian population, wretches less to pity than blame, for misery, ignorance, and idleness most fatally engender vice and crime. With these savage outcasts of society there was neither pity, instruction, nor affright, in the terrible pictures with which they were at each instant surrounded, regardless of a life which they every day struggled for against hunger and temptations to crime; and they braved the terrible scourge with infernal audacity, or succumbed to it with blasphemy on their lips.

The tall stature of the quarrier overtopped all others, as, with bloodshot eye and infuriated countenance, he vociferated, with all his might:

"Death to the Carabins" (a nickname for the medical students); "they poison the people!"

"It is easier than to feed them!" chimed in Ciboule.

Then turning to an old man in mortal throes, whom two men with difficulty conveyed through the dense mob in a chair, the beldam added:

"Don't go in there, I say, old Kick-the-bucket; but die here in the open air, instead of rotting in that hole, poisoned like an old rat!"

"Yes," added the quarrier; "and they will fling you into the water to regale the bleak that you will never taste again, old chap!"

At this disgusting ribaldry the old man turned his wandering eyes and uttered several groans. Ciboule was desirous of stopping the progress of the bearers, who, with much difficulty, got away from the cursed hag. The number of cholera patients carried to the Hôtel Dieu increased every moment, and the usual means of conveyance failing for want of litters and hand-barrows, they were carried in people's arms.

In places frightful episodes bore testimony to the terrible rapidity of the scourge.

Two men carried a litter covered with a cloth stained with blood. One of them felt himself seized suddenly, and stopped short; his failing arms let go the litter; he turned pale, staggered, and half fell on the patient he had been conveying, becoming as livid as he himself. The other bearer, alarmed, fled with horror, leaving his companion and the dying man in the midst of the throng. Some retreated with horror, whilst others burst into a fit of savage laughter.

"The horses have taken fright," said the quarrier, "and left the carriage behind them."

"Help!" exclaimed the dying man, in a dolorous tone. "For mercy's sake, convey me to the hospital!"

"The pit is full," said some brutal jester.

"And you cannot walk up to the gallery" (*paradis*), added another.

The dying man made an effort to raise himself, but his strength was unequal to the task, and he fell exhausted on his mattress; suddenly the multitude pressed backwards, violently overturned the litter, and the bearer and the dying man were trampled under foot, their groans being drowned in shouts of "Death to the Carabins!"

The howlings were resumed with intense fury. The savage band, which, in their ferocious madness, respected nothing, were yet compelled to open its ranks before several workmen who vigorously forced a passage for two of their comrades, carrying in their united arms a workman still young, whose head, borne down and already livid, was leaning on the shoulder of one of his companions, a little child sobbing bitterly, and clinging to the blouse of one of the workmen.

For some moments there had been heard in the distance in the crooked streets of the Cité the sonorous and regular noise of several drums. They were beating the

rappel, for the *émeute* had broken out in the Faubourg St. Antoine. The drummers, coming by the vaulted arcade, crossed the square in front of Notre-Dame. One of these soldiers, a veteran with gray moustache, suddenly paused from the sonorous rolling of his drum, and remained a step behind; his companions turned around in surprise, — he was green, his legs bent under him, he stammered some unintelligible words, and fell, as if struck by lightning, on the pavement, before the drums of the first rank had ceased beating. The rapidity of this attack for a moment alarmed the boldest; and, surprised at the sudden interruption of the *rappel*, some of the crowd ran, full of curiosity, towards the drummers.

At the sight of the dying soldier, whom two of his companions supported in their arms, one of the two men, who, under the arch we alluded to, had been present at the outbreak of the popular commotion, said to the other drummer:

"Perhaps your comrade has been drinking at some fountain?"

"Yes, sir," replied the soldier; "he was dying with thirst, and swallowed two mouthfuls at the Place du Châtelet."

"Then he has been poisoned," said the man.

"Poisoned!" exclaimed several voices.

"There is nothing astonishing in that," added the man, with a mysterious air. "They are poisoning all the public fountains. This morning they killed a man in the Rue Beaubourg, whom they detected in emptying a paper of arsenic into the great jug of a wine-dealer."[1]

And, having said this, the man mingled with the crowd, and was lost.

This report, no less unfounded than the report which was rife with respect to the poisoning of the sick in the Hôtel Dieu, was hailed by an explosion of indignant

[1] It is well known that at this epoch several persons were murdered under a false pretence of poisoning.

cries. Five or six fellows, in rags, regular ruffians, seized the body of the dying drummer, raised it on their shoulders, and, carrying this sinister trophy, bore it around the square, preceded by the quarrier and Ciboule, exclaiming, as they went:

"Room for the corpse! This is the way they poison the people!"

Another impulse was given to the mob by the arrival of a travelling-carriage, drawn by four horses, which, unable to pass by the Quai Napoleon, then partly unpaved, had ventured on threading the mazy streets of the Cité, in order to reach the other bank of the Seine by the square of Notre-Dame.

Like many others, these travellers were flying from Paris to escape the scourge which was decimating it. A man and woman servant were seated in the rumble, and gave a glance of fear as they passed before the Hôtel Dieu, whilst a young man inside, sitting in the front seat, lowered the glass, desiring the postilions to go forward slowly for fear of an accident, as the crowd was so dense. This young man was M. de Morinval, and in the back seats were M. de Montbron and his niece, Madame de Morinval. The pallor and altered features of the young lady betokened her alarm, and M. de Montbron, in spite of his strength of mind, seemed very uneasy, and smelt every minute, as well as his niece, a bottle filled with camphor.

For some minutes the carriage advanced slowly, the postilions conducting the horses very cautiously. Suddenly there was a noise which, at first dull and distant, increased as it approached, and then were distinctly heard the peculiar sounds of chains and iron-work, which belong to the artillery masons. It was, in fact, one of these vehicles which, coming in an opposite direction to the travelling-carriage, must soon meet it.

It was very strange that, compact as was the crowd, the progress of the wagon was rapid, and, at the approach

of the vehicle, the dense multitude made a space for it as if by enchantment.

This wonder was soon explained by the words repeated from mouth to mouth:

"The dead-wagon! The dead-wagon!"

The service of the funeral-carriage not being adequate to the conveyance required, a number of artillery-wagons had been put in requisition, in which they piled the coffins in heaps. Whilst the majority of bystanders looked at this ill-omened vehicle with dread, the quarrier and his band redoubled their brutal jests.

"Room for the cold-meat omnibus!" said Ciboule.

"In this omnibus there is no fear of the passengers treading on each other's toes," exclaimed the quarrier.

"They are very nice people, those inside passengers!"

"They never ask to get out, at least!"

"See, there is only one soldier for postilion!"

"Yes, the leaders are driven by a man in a blouse."

"Perhaps the other soldier was a little tired, poor dear, and has got inside the cold-meat omnibus with the others, and they'll all get out at the big hole."

"Head forwards as usual."

"Yes, they lay down their heads in a chalk bed."

"Where they lie on the floor, as they say."

"Ah, one could follow the cold meat with eyes shut —it is worse than Montfauçon."

"True, the meat does not smell over fresh," added the quarrier, alluding to the foul and infecting reek which this funereal wagon left behind it.

"Good!" continued the hag Ciboule; "see, the death-cart will run foul of this fine, dashing carriage. So much the better. Let the rich have a smell of death."

And in fact the wagon was close upon the carriage at this moment, and a man in a blouse and wooden shoes rode the leaders, whilst a soldier of the train was on the wheeler.

The coffins were piled so high, and there were so

many in the wagon, that its semicircular covering was but half closed, so that, at each jolt of the vehicle, which, going fast, was much shaken over the irregular pavement, the biers might be seen jumbling against each other.

By the glowing eyes of the man in the blouse and his inflamed cheeks, it was easy to see that he was half drunk, and urging his horses with his heels and whip, in spite of the useless admonitions of the soldier, who, hardly able to restrain his horses, followed in spite of himself the reckless pace which the fellow gave to the vehicle. Thus, the drunkard swerving from the straight line, came right upon the carriage and struck it violently.

At the shock the lid of the wagon fell back, and, impelled forwards by the sudden blow, one of the coffins, after having driven violently against one of the panels of the berline, fell on the ground with a dull, heavy sound.

The fall disjointed the deal boards nailed hastily together, and, in the midst of the fragments of the coffin, there rolled out a blue and livid carcass, half wrapped in a shroud.

At this horrible sight, Madame de Morinval, who had mechanically advanced her head out of the window, uttered a loud shriek and fainted.

The mob receded with horror. The postilions of the carriage, no less frightened, took advantage of the space made before them by the rapid retreat of the multitude, to favour the advance of the wagon, and, flogging their horses, the carriage advanced towards the quay.

At the moment when the berline disappeared behind the Hôtel Dieu there were heard the noisy sounds of joyous music, and repeated cries, as it advanced, of "The cholera masquerade!"

These words bespoke one of those episodes half buffoon, half terrible, yet scarcely credible, which marked the progress of this scourge.

In truth, if contemporary testimony was not com-

pletely accordant with the details of the public papers on the subject of this masquerade, we should say that, instead of an actual fact, it was the invention of some demented brain. The masquerade of the cholera came into the square of Notre-Dame at the moment when the carriage of M. de Morinval disappeared on the other side, after having been run against by the dead-wagon.

CHAPTER IX.

THE MASQUERADE OF THE CHOLERA.[1]

A CROWD of persons preceding the masquerade came suddenly by the vault of the square with great noise and turbulence; boys blowing horns, others hollaing, others whistling and hooting, as they appeared.

The quarrier, Ciboule, and their band, attracted by this new sight, rushed precipitately in a body towards the arched passage.

Instead of the two *traiteurs* which are on each side of the Rue d'Arcole, there was then only one, which was on the left hand of the arcade, and greatly renowned in the joyous world of the students for the excellence of its wines and cookery.

At the first sound of the blasts blown by the running footmen who preceded the masquerade, the windows of the great saloon of the cookshop opened, and several waiters, with napkins under their arms, leaned out of the windows, impatient to see the arrival of the strange guests whom they were expecting.

At length the grotesque procession appeared, in the midst of immense uproar.

The masquerade was composed of a four-wheel car, escorted by men and women on horseback; cavaliers

[1] In the *Constitutionnel* of Saturday, March 31, 1832, we read:
"The Parisians conform to that part of the general order as to the cholera, which, amongst other preservative receipts, prescribes that all fear of the malady was to be discouraged, that persons were to recreate themselves, etc. The pleasures of mid-Lent were as brilliant and frolicsome as those of the Carnival itself. There had not been for a long time at this period of the year so many balls. Even the cholera itself was the subject of an ambulatory caricature."

and amazons wore fancy costumes, equally rich and elegant, the majority of masks belonging to the middle class, in easy circumstances.

There had been a rumour that a masquerade had been organised with the intention of bullying (*narguer*) the cholera, and, by a merry display, raising the spirits of the frightened populace; and thus artists, young men of fashion, students, clerks, etc., had answered the appeal, and, although up to this period unknown to each other, they fraternised immediately. Many of them, to complete the fête, brought their lady-loves. A subscription had covered the expenses of the fête, and on the morning, after a splendid breakfast at the farther end of Paris, the joyous group had started bravely on their way to conclude the day by a dinner in the square of Notre-Dame.

We say bravely, because it required in the young females a singular strength of mind, an unusual firmness of character, in order thus to traverse this great city, plunged in consternation and amazement, to cross at every turn litters charged with the dying, and vehicles loaded with the dead, in order to attack, by the strangest pleasantry, the scourge that was decimating Paris.

Moreover, in Paris only, and only in a certain portion of its population, could such an idea be formed and realised.

Two men, grotesquely attired as postilions of funereal ceremonies, ornamented with formidable false noses, wearing weepers of pink crape, and in their buttonholes large bouquets of roses and bows of crape, conducted the car.

On the platform of this vehicle were groups of allegorical personages, representing Wine, Folly, Love, Gaming.

These symbolical personages had, as their providential mission, to make, by their "quips, and nods, and wreathed smiles," their jests, sarcasms, and mockeries, the life of the "*bon homme* Cholera" exceedingly hard

and unpleasant to him, — a funereal and burlesque ceremony which they joked and merry-andrewed over in a thousand different ways.

The moral of this thing was this:

To brave the cholera with assurance it was requisite to drink, laugh, play, and make love.

Wine had for its representation a gross Silenus, punch-bellied, broad-chested, thickset, and horned, wearing a wreath of ivy around his brows, a panther's skin over his shoulders, and in his hand a large cup, gilt and surrounded by flowers.

None other than Nini-Moulin, the moral and religious writer, could offer to the astonished and delighted spectators an ear more scarlet, an abdomen more majestic, a physiognomy more triumphant and beaming.

At each moment Nini-Moulin affected to empty his cup, after which he burst out into a fit of insolent laughter in the face of the *bon homme* Cholera.

The *bon homme* Cholera, the cadaverous old man, was half dressed in a shroud, his mask of greenish pasteboard; his red and hollow eyes seemed at each moment to grimace death in a most joyous manner. Under his wig, with three rows of curls, powdered carefully, and surmounted by a high-peaked cotton nightcap, his neck and one arm were seen from beneath the shroud, tinged of a bright green colour; his skinny hand, continually tremulous with a feverish tremor (not affected, but real), was leaning on a crutch-handled stick; and he wore, as becomes all old gentlemen of the stage, red stockings, with buckles to his garters, and high-heeled shoes of black beaver.

This grotesque representation of the cholera was Couche-tout-Nud.

In spite of a slow and dangerous fever, caused by the abuse of brandy and debauchery, a fever which was silently, but surely, undermining his health, Jacques had been induced by Morok to make one in this masquerade.

The tamer of beasts, dressed as the king of clubs, represented Gaming.

His forehead, encircled with a diadem of gilt pasteboard, his countenance immovable and pallid, with a long yellow beard which fell down the front of his gown, formed of bright colours, Morok looked his part to perfection. From time to time, with an air of serene mockery, he shook in the very eyes of *bon homme* Cholera a large bag filled with rattling counters, and on which was painted all sorts of playing cards. A stiffness in the motion of his right arm announced that the brute-tamer still felt something of the wound which the black panther had inflicted on him before she was destroyed by Djalma.

Folly, symbolising Laughter, shook with classic air, in the ears of Goodman Cholera, her bauble with its gilt and sounding bells. Folly was a pretty, active, and lively girl, wearing on her fine head of hair a Phrygian cap of scarlet. She was Couche-tout-Nud's substitute for the poor Queen-Bacchanal, who would not have failed at such a high festival — she, so bold and gay — she who but awhile since had borne a prominent part in a masquerade, less philosophical, perhaps in its designs, but quite as amusing.

Another very lovely creature, Mlle. Modeste Bornichoux, who was the model for a renowned artist (one of the cavaliers of the procession), represented Love, and most charmingly; for Love could not have had a more beautiful countenance nor a more perfect figure. Dressed in a blue-bespangled tunic, wearing a blue and silver bandeau over her chestnut locks, and two transparent wings behind her white shoulders, Love, crossing the forefinger of her right hand over the forefinger of her left hand, from time to time (the triviality of the remark will be excused us) —Love made very graceful but impertinent gestures to Goodman Cholera.

Around the principal groups were other masks, more or less whimsical, who waved banners, on which were written such Anacreontic inscriptions as these:

"Bury the Cholera!"
"Short and sweet!"
"Let those laugh now who never laughed before!
And those who always laughed now laugh the more!"
"The 'knowing ones' will do the Cholera!"
"*Vive l'Amour!*"
"*Vive le Vin!*"
"Love and wine!"
"Come if you dare, ill-conditioned scourge!"

There was, indeed, so much audacity in this gay masquerade, that the majority of the spectators, at the moment when it defiled into the square to go to the restaurateur's where the dinner awaited them, applauded most lustily; but this admiration, always inspired by courage, however foolhardy or blind it may be, appeared to some of the lookers-on (but few, it is true) a sort of defiance thrown at the anger of Heaven, and they hailed the cortège with murmurs of discontent.

This extraordinary spectacle, and the different impressions which it caused, were too uncommon to be justly appreciated, and it is difficult to decide whether this courageous bravado deserves praise or blame.

Besides, the appearance of those scourges which, from ages to ages, decimate populations has almost always been attended by a sort of moral overexcitement, which none have escaped whom the contagion has spared,—a feverish and strange vertigo which sometimes calls into play the most stupid passions, the most ferocious passions, sometimes, on the contrary, inspires the most intense devotion, the most courageous actions, and creates in some the fear of death, even to the most weak terrors, whilst with others the disdain of life is manifested by the most audacious bravado.

Reflecting little on the praise or blame which it might

deserve, the masquerade reached the door of the restaurateur, and entered amidst universal acclamations.

All seemed to conspire to complete this whimsical device by the most striking contrasts.

Thus the tavern at which this singular Bacchanalia was about to take place being precisely situated close to the antique cathedral and the sinister hospital, the religious choir of the old church, the cries of the dying, and the bacchic shoutings would drown each other and be heard in turns.

The maskers having descended from carriage and horseback, went to take their places at the banquet that awaited them.

The actors of the masquerade were seated at table in a large room, joyous, noisy, riotous; and yet their joy, their noise, and their rioting were of a strange character.

Sometimes the most audacious remembered involuntarily that it was their life they staked in this foolhardy and daring struggle with the scourge. This gloomy thought was as rapid as the feverish shudder which chills the frame to ice in a moment, and, from time to time, sudden silence, lasting but a second, betrayed these passing sensations, soon effaced by fresh bursts of joy, for each said: "No weakness; my companions, my mistress, are looking at me!"

And each laughed and drank with lively air, speaking familiarly to his neighbour, and drinking by choice from the glass of his lady neighbour.

Couche-tout-Nud had laid aside the mask and wig of Goodman Cholera. The meagreness of his shrunken features, their unhealthy pallor, the gloomy brightness of his hollow eyes, — all told the rapid and incessant strides of the malady which slowly consumed him, arriving as he had done by excesses to the last stage of exhaustion. Yet though he felt a slow fire consume his

entrails, he concealed his agony beneath a forced and nervous laugh.

On the left of Jacques was Morok, whose fatal contest went on increasing; and on his right, the young girl disguised as Folly. Her name was Mariette, and on the other side of her Nini-Moulin spread himself out like a peacock's tail, in all the pride of his majestic embonpoint, frequently pretending to seek his napkin under the table that he might squeeze the knees of his other neighbour, Mlle. Modeste, who represented Love.

The majority of the guests were grouped according to their tastes, each beside his lady, the single men, who had no wives with them, sitting where they could. They had entered on the second course, and the excellence of the wines, the good cheer, the gay conversation, and the very singularity of their position, had strangely excited all the guests, as may be supposed, by the extraordinary incidents of the following scene.

CHAPTER X.

THE SINGULAR CONTEST.

TWICE or thrice one of the waiters had come in, and, without being remarked by the guests, had spoken in a low voice to his comrades, pointing significantly to the ceiling of the festive hall; but his companions had taken no heed of his observations or his fears, being probably unwilling to derange the company, whose headlong mirth continued even faster and more furiously.

"Who will now venture to doubt the superiority of our mode of treating this impertinent Cholera? Has he dared to lay a finger on our sacred battalion?" asked a magnificent Turkish juggler, one of the banner-bearers of the masquerade.

"This is the mystery," replied another; "and very simple it is. Laugh in the teeth of the Goodman Scourge, and he turns his back forthwith."

"And very right of him, when he does so many rascally things," added a pretty little Pierrette, as she emptied her glass with a graceful air.

"You are right, lovey-dovey, — it is rascally and ultra-rascally," responded the Pierrat of the Pierrette; "for one moment there you are quiet enough, enjoying the good things of this life, and the next, after an atrocious grimace, you die. Well, what then? Isn't it malicious — isn't it odd? I should like to know what it all means."

"It means," replied a celebrated romantic painter, disguised as a Roman of the school of David, — "it

means that the Cholera is a miserable colourist, for his palette has but one hue, a bad green. The fellow has evidently studied under that horrible artist Jacobus, the king of classic painters, the scourge of another description."

"Still, master," added a pupil of the great master, very respectfully, "I have seen cholera patients whose convulsions had a very considerable turn in them, and whose death-throes were not deficient in expression."

"Gentlemen," exclaimed a sculptor, not less famous, "let us investigate the question. The cholera is a detestable colourist, but a rigorous designer. He will anatomise you an outline in a rough fashion. How he picks in the flesh! After him Michael Angelo is but a scholar."

"Decidedly," cried everybody; "the Cholera is a detestable colourist, but a rigorous designer."

"Besides, sirs," added Nini-Moulin, with comic gravity, "there is in this scourge a kind of a sort of providential lesson, as the great Bossuet says."

"The lesson! The lesson!"

"Yes, sirs, I seem to hear a voice from above, which says, 'Drink of the best, empty your purse, and keep the pretty girl next to you; for, perhaps, your hours are numbered, ye unhappy wretches!'"

So saying, the orthodox Silenus profited for a moment by the absence of mind of Mlle. Modeste, his neighbour, to cull from the flowery cheek of Lôve a hearty and resounding kiss.

The example was contagious, and a smacking of lips mingled with fresh shouts of laughter.

"*Tubleu, vertebleu, ventrebleu!*" exclaimed the great painter, gaily, menacing Nini-Moulin; "you are very happy, although, perhaps, to-morrow is the end of the world. Were it not so, I would quarrel with you for having embraced the Love who is my love."

"Which proves to you, oh, Rubens, oh, Raphael, that

you have the thousand advantages of the Cholera, which I proclaim to be essentially sociable and endearing."

"And philanthropic, too," said a guest; "for, thanks to him, creditors take care of the health of their debtors. This morning a usurer, who is particularly interested in my existence, brings me all sorts of anti-choleric drugs, of which he entreats me to make use."

"And as for me," said the pupil of the eminent painter, "my tailor wished to compel me to wear a flannel waistcoat next my skin, because I owe him some thousand crowns. I replied to him, 'Oh, tailor! Give me a receipt in full and I will enflannel myself, in order to ensure you my custom, since you seem so anxious about it."

"Oh, Cholera, to thee I drink," replied Nini-Moulin, with much grotesqueness of manner; "thou art not despair; quite t'other! Thou symbolisest hope — yea, hope. How many husbands, how many wives, rely solely on a number, — a chance, alas! Too uncertain in the lottery of widowhood! Thou appearest, and their hopes renew; thanks to thee, oh, complaisant scourge, for in thee they see their chances of liberty revived a hundredfold."

"And then think of heirs at law; imagine their gratitude! A chill, a spasm, a nothing, a pshaw, and in an hour an uncle, or some kinsman, becomes forthwith a venerated benefactor."

"And then those individuals who are always on the lookout for the places of others, what a glorious coadjutor they find in the cholera!"

"And then how many oaths of constancy are made true!" said Mlle. Modeste, with an air of sentimentality. "How many gay deceivers have sworn to a weak and trusting woman to love her for life, and did not expect, the Bedouins! to be so faithful to their words."

"Sirs," exclaimed Nini-Moulin, "since, perhaps, we are at the eve of the world's ending, as the celebrated

painter has said, I propose that we begin to play at the world turned upside down; I desire that these ladies toy with us, that they are impertinent to us, that they coquette with us, that they steal from us delicate kisses, and take every liberty they please with us, — and yet I dare say we shall not die thereof. I really desire that they shall insult us; yes, I declare I will allow myself to be insulted; I court their insults. Thus, then, Love, you may favour me with the worst insult that can be inflicted on a virtuous and bashful bachelor," added the religious writer, bending towards Mlle. Modeste, who repulsed him, laughing at the same time immoderately.

A burst of unanimous hilarity hailed the whimsical proposition of Nini-Moulin, and the orgies continued with fresh impetus.

In the midst of this brawling tumult, the waiter, who had already entered several times speaking in a whisper and with a disturbed air to his comrades, whilst pointing to the ceiling, reappeared with a pale and agitated countenance, and coming up to the man who was fulfilling the office of *maître-d'hôtel*, he said to him, in a low and agitated voice:

"They have just come in."

"Who?"

"You know well enough, — for the room overhead," and he pointed to the ceiling.

"Ah!" said the *maître-d'hôtel*, becoming serious, "and where are they?"

"Going up-stairs; they are there by this time," added the waiter, shaking his head with a frightened air, — "they are there."

"What does master say?"

"Oh, he is much distressed in consequence of —" And the waiter gave a glance at the guests. "He does not know what to do; he sent me to you."

"And what the devil am I to do?" said the other,

wiping his brow. "It was to be expected, there was no chance of escaping from it."

"I sha'n't stay here any longer, for it's going to begin."

"You'll do well; for with your disturbed look you will excite everybody's attention; so be off, and say to master that we must await the event."

This incident passed almost unperceived in the midst of the increasing tumult of the joyous meeting.

Yet there was one amongst the guests who did not laugh nor drink, — it was Couche-tout-Nud; his gloomy and fixed eye gazed on vacancy. A stranger to what was passing around him, the unhappy creature was thinking of the Queen-Bacchanal, who would have been so brilliant, so gay in such saturnalia. The remembrance of her whom he still loved with extravagant love was the sole thought which came, from time to time, to break in upon his brutalised condition.

Strange! Jacques had only consented to play a part in this masquerade, because this mad day recalled to him the last fête he had passed with Céphyse, that *réveille-matin* which followed the night of the *bal masqué*, that joyous repast in the midst whereof the Queen-Bacchanal, by a singular presentiment, had given that disheartening toast in reference to the scourge which they said then was approaching France. "To the cholera!" Céphyse said. "May it spare those who desire to live, and kill those in company who do not desire to live separate!"

At this moment Jacques was deeply absorbed, reflecting on these painful words. Morok, remarking his abstraction, said to him aloud:

"What! Don't you drink, Jacques? Had wine enough? Want some brandy? I'll ask for some for you."

"I want neither wine nor brandy," answered Jacques, sullenly; and he fell again into his gloomy reverie.

"Ah, you are right!" continued Morok, with a sar-

castic tone, and raising his voice. "You are right to take care of yourself; I was a fool to talk of brandy,—according to the times in which we are, there would be as much rashness in facing a bottle of brandy as in looking down the barrel of a loaded pistol."

When Couche-tout-Nud heard his courage as a drinker called in question, he looked at Morok with an irritated air.

"Do you mean to say that it is from cowardice that I dare not drink brandy?" exclaimed the wretched man, whose understanding, half extinct, was aroused to defend what he called his dignity. "Do you mean to say it's cowardice, eh, Morok?"

"Come, come, my brave lad, as we all are to-day we have given proofs," said one of the guests to Jacques, "and you particularly, who, being an invalid, had the courage to accept the character of the *bon homme* Cholera."

"Messieurs," replied Morok, observing the general attention fixed on him and Couche-tout-Nud, "I was jesting, for if my comrade," pointing to Jacques, "had had the imprudence to accept my offer, he would have been, not courageous, but mad. Fortunately he has had the wisdom to renounce such boasting, so dangerous at such a time, and I—"

"Waiter," said Couche-tout-Nud, interrupting Morok with angry inpatience, "two bottles of brandy and two glasses."

"What are you going to do?" said Morok, feigning uneasy surprise. "What do you want with two bottles of brandy?"

"For a duel," said Jacques, in a cold and resolute tone.

"A duel!" said everybody with surprise.

"Yes," said Jacques, "a duel with brandy; you say there is as much danger in placing oneself before a bottle of brandy as before the muzzle of a loaded pistol. Let

us two take each a full bottle, and we shall then see which will give up first."

This extravagant proposition of Couche-tout-Nud was hailed by some with shouts of mirth, by others with serious inquietude.

"Bravo, the Champions of the Bottle!" cried the former.

"No, no, there would be too great danger in such a contest," said the latter.

"Such a challenge, as times are, is as serious as a duel to the death," added another.

"You understand," said Morok, with a fiendish smile, —"you understand, Jacques? . Let us now see if you recoil before danger."

At these words, which recalled to him again the peril to which he was about to expose himself, Jacques started as if a sudden idea had come into his mind, raised his head indignantly, whilst his cheeks coloured slightly, and his sunken eye shone with a sort of gloomy satisfaction, and he called out in a firm voice:

"Waiter, are you deaf? Didn't you hear me ask for two bottles of brandy?"

"Yes, sir," said the waiter, going out almost frightened at what would be the progress and result of this bacchic contest.

Yet the mad and perilous resolution of Jacques was applauded by the majority. Nini-Moulin wriggled about in his chair, stamping with his feet, and exclaiming, in a tremendous voice:

"Bacchus and my thirst! My glass and my pint! Throats are open! Brandy to the rescue! Largess, largess!" and he embraced Mlle. Modeste, like a real champion of the tournament, adding, as an excuse for the liberty, "Love, you shall be the Queen of Beauty, I was merely experimenting on the happiness of the conqueror."

"Brandy to the rescue!" repeated the chorus. "Largess!"

"Sirs," added Nini-Moulin with enthusiasm, "shall we remain indifferent to the noble example which Goodman Cholera," he pointed to Jacques, "gives us? He has loudly called for cognac; let us reply to him gloriously, Punch!"

"Yes, yes — punch!"

"Punch to the rescue!"

"Waiter," cried the religious writer, in a stentor's voice, "waiter, have you any bowl, caldron, basin, any something immense, in which one can brew a monster punch?"

"A Babylonian punch!" "A punch lake!" "A punch ocean!" was the daring crescendo which followed Nini-Moulin's proposition.

"Sir," replied the waiter, with a triumphant mien, "we have such a brass saucepan, fresh tinned; it has never been used, and will hold nearly thirty bottles."

"Bring hither the aforesaid," said Nini-Moulin, with majesty.

"The saucepan for ever!" cried the chorus.

"Put therein twenty bottles of kirch, six loaves of sugar, twelve lemons, a pound of cinnamon, and then light it, light it!" exclaimed the pious penman, uttering superhuman cries.

"Yes, light it; let it blaze!" exclaimed the chorus.

Nini-Moulin's proposal gave a new impetus to the general gaiety; the most absurd propositions were heard mingling with the pleasant sound of sudden kisses, given with the excuse that perhaps there was no morrow for them, that they must resign themselves to fate, etc.

Suddenly, in the midst of one of those momentary lulls which occur in the midst of the noisiest tumults, there were heard several dull and measured blows overhead of the festive apartment.

Every one was silent and listened.

CHAPTER XI.

BRANDY TO THE RESCUE!

At the end of a few seconds, the singular noise which had so greatly surprised the party assembled, was repeated, but this time the noise was greater and lasted longer.

"I say, waiter," exclaimed one of the guests, "what the devil are they about overhead?"

The man, exchanging a rapid and uneasy glance with the other waiters attending in the room, stammered forth:

"What are they doing, sir? Oh, it is—"

"No doubt some brute beast of a sulky fellow lodging up there," said Nini-Moulin, "who gives us a hint, by thumping against the ceiling, not to sing quite so loud."

"The general rule upon such occasions," interposed the pupil of the great painter, in a formal and sententious manner, "being (according to traditionary account) that whenever a landlord, or lodger, demands silence after this manner, he shall be immediately replied to by a *charivari* resembling a concert of devils, and calculated to put an effectual stop to the claimant's power of being annoyed through the medium of his hearing for the rest of his life. Such at least," added the antiquary, in a modest tone, "are the relative modes of communication I have myself always seen practised between the high and celestial powers."

This somewhat hazardous doctrine was received by all the party with universal cheers and loud, uproarious

mirth. During the tumult which prevailed, Morok contrived to question one of the waiters, and, having received his answer, exclaimed in a loud, piercing tone, capable of being heard in the midst of all the din of voices:

"I demand to be heard!"

"By all manner of means," answered a mirthful guest; "let the gentleman clear his throat and speak up."

During the silence which immediately followed these words, the noise overhead was renewed, but this time the blows seemed more hastily struck.

"The lodger above stairs is innocent of any desire to repress your gaiety," said Morok, with a sarcastic grin; "having neither the will nor the power to offer the slightest interruption to the pleasures of this meeting."

"Then what the deuce does he keep thumping away for, as though he were not only deaf himself, but intended to render us all so?" asked Nini-Moulin, tossing off a bumper of wine.

"Pattering and pattering like a blind man who has dropped his stick," added the pedantic antiquarian painter.

"It is not the lodger you hear," replied Morok, in a dry, cutting tone; "it is the noise of men closing his coffin!"

A gloomy and sudden silence followed these words.

"His coffin!" resumed Morok; "stay, I am wrong. I should more properly say their coffin, for, being pressed for time, the child has been laid in the same receptacle as the mother."

"A woman!" exclaimed La Folie, addressing the waiter. "Is it, then, a female who is dead?"

"Oh, yes, madame! It is indeed a poor young creature scarcely twenty years of age," replied the waiter, sorrowfully; "and the babe she nursed at her bosom died almost immediately after her, both mother and child

being taken off in less than two hours. Our master is extremely sorry your comfort should in any way be interfered with, but it was quite impossible to foresee this misfortune, for yesterday morning my mistress was in perfect health, and she was fresh as a rose, and laughed and sung the merriest of any person in the house."

At this account, a dark funereal gloom seemed to fall on the hitherto joyous party; the mirthful, laughing countenances were quickly overspread by a feeling of awe and approaching danger, and no voice was found bold enough to utter a jesting allusion to the lifeless bodies of the young mother and her child, who were being closed up in the same coffin.

So unbroken was the silence which reigned, that the very respiration of the more terrified part of the company could be distinctly heard; while the last sound of the undertaker's hammer seemed to reëcho on their own hearts, and it seemed as though the crowd of painful and gloomy ideas, so long refused admission in their breasts, rushed back with redoubled force to replace the false excitement and noisy mirth which had hitherto actuated their wild, thoughtless conduct.

It was a decisive moment, and it became necessary to strike, on the very instant, some important blow, by which the flagging spirits of the party should be raised to their former factitious elevation; for already several rosy cheeks had assumed the pallor of marble, and many rubicund visages had changed to a cadaverous, cowardly white. Among the latter number was Nini-Moulin; while Couche-tout-Nud, redoubling his energy and boldness, and drawing up his form, already bending beneath the enervating effects of constant dissipation, cried out, while a bright, feverish glow tinged his features:

"Why, waiter, what the devil are you about not to bring either the brandy or punch that was ordered? Confound it all, are the dead to make the living shiver and shake in the midst of their enjoyments?"

"Ah, to be sure! Hang melancholy! Come, come, the punch!" cried several of the guests, powerfully aware of the necessity of finding some restorative for their cast-down joyousness.

"Now, then, bring forward the punch — punch for ever!"

"Hang care!"

"Long live mirth and jollity!"

"Gentlemen," said the waiter, opening the door, "I beg pardon for being so long; here is the punch!"

The arrival of the flaming beverage, to which so many looked as the certain means of fortifying their diminished courage, was received with an almost frenzied applause.

The sun had just set, and the spacious apartment in which the entertainment was served was but dimly lighted by a few narrow windows, almost hid by the quantity of red cotton draperies with which they were festooned by way of curtains, and although not, strictly speaking, night, the more distant part of the vast chamber was plunged in almost total darkness.

Two waiters carried in between them the monster punch-bowl, by means of a bar of iron passed through the handle of an immense brazen caldron, bright as burnished gold, from the summit of which issued forth a wreathing pyramid of many-coloured flames.

"Now, then," said Couche-tout-Nud to Morok, in a tone of defiance, "while we are waiting for the punch to burn itself out, let us have our mortal encounter, and let the surrounding spectators sit as judges!" Then, pointing out the two bottles of brandy just set down by the waiter, Jacques added, addressing his adversary, "Choose your weapons!"

"Choose them yourself," replied Morok.

"Very well, here is your bottle and glass; Nini-Moulin shall judge of the draughts we drink."

"Certainly; I do not object to act as judge of the

lists," replied the religious and political writer. "Only one thing I must warn you of, my friend, and that is, you are playing a high stake, and that, at such a time as the present (as a gentleman in the room observed just now), to place the neck of a bottle of brandy between your teeth is, perhaps, more dangerous than to introduce the muzzle of a loaded pistol into your mouth, and —"

"Come, don't preach, old boy," said Jacques, interrupting Nini-Moulin's well-meant endeavours to reason him out of so rash an attempt upon his life, "but give the word to begin, or I shall do it myself."

"Well, since you are resolved, so be it."

"And remember, the first who gives in is conquered," added Jacques.

"Agreed!" replied Morok.

"Now, then, gentlemen, attention, and let us see what you can do," cried Nini-Moulin; "but first let us see whether there is any difference in the size of the bottles, in all such cases equality of weapons is a first-rate consideration."

A profound silence reigned in the apartment while these preparations were going on. The courage of many present, although temporarily stimulated by the arrival of the punch, soon sunk again under the influence of the heavy presentiments which assailed them, and a vague dread hung over the minds of all that much danger was involved in the challenge given by Morok to Jacques. This impression, joined to the painful reflections awakened by the nailing down of the coffin overhead, overshadowed every countenance, either more or less, with an air of depression and sadness. Some of the guests, struggling with their fast-growing fears, exerted themselves, by various attempts at mirth, to shake off the gloom which oppressed them, — but all in vain. Their noisy flushes of forced gaiety fell upon cold and unadmiring ears, and were quickly extinguished in the dead chill of their silent reception. After certain circum-

stances have developed themselves, the most trifling events have frequently a powerful influence in directing the after-course of things.

We have already said that after sunset a portion of the vast apartment occupied by the masqueraders was perfectly dark; thus, such of the company as were seated at the far end were soon involved in utter obscurity, except such light as was afforded by the flickering flame of the still burning punch, the spirituous flame arising from which cast a pale, bluish tint on every face within its influence, and a strange and fearful spectacle was afforded by the sight of a numerous party of guests, illumined only by these sepulchral hues, in proportion as they were seated farther from or nearer to the windows.

The painter, whose professional eye was quickly caught by the effect of this fantastic mode of lighting a table, suddenly called out:

"Pray observe us here at the end of the table; we seem to have raised a banquet to cholera, and to have turned blue and green while partaking of it."

This attempt at wit was very coolly received; but the loud, sonorous voice of Nini-Moulin, calling for "attention," came just in time to prevent any further manifestation of displeasure.

"The lists are opened!" cried the religious writer, more sincerely alarmed and uneasy than he chose to appear. "Are you ready, brave champions?" added he.

"We are," answered both Morok and Jacques.

"Then on and fire!" cried Nini-Moulin, clapping his hands.

At which signal the two drinkers immediately emptied at one draught an ordinary-sized tumbler of brandy.

Not a muscle of Morok's hard, iron features moved, and with a firm hand he replaced his glass on the table. But, as Jacques followed his example, he was unable to repress a slight convulsive tremor, caused by severe internal pain.

"Well done, and well drank!" cried Nini-Moulin. "To swallow off the fourth part of a bottle of brandy at one gulp is triumph indeed. No person here present could perform such a feat, I feel quite assured; and, if you will take my advice, you will go no further."

"Give the word!" replied Couche-tout-Nud, intrepidly, while with his feverish, trembling hand he seized the bottle; but, all at once, instead of pouring forth into his glass, he said to Morok, "Let's have done with glasses! What say you, do you dare drink from the bottle? It is more of a thing to do, — more of a deed to set men wondering."

Morok's only reply was to shrug his shoulders and to carry the bottle to his lips. Jacques instantly followed his example. The thin yellow glass of which the bottles were composed rendered it easy for the spectators to observe the rapid diminution of their contents.

The stony, impassive features of Morok, as well as the thin, pale countenance of Jacques, down which streams of cold perspiration were stealing their clammy way, were, at that moment, as well as the faces of the other persons near them, lighted up by the blue flame of the punch, while every eye was fixed on Morok and Jacques with that intense though barbarous curiosity inspired almost involuntarily by cruel spectacles.

As Jacques drank he held the bottle in his left hand; suddenly he closed and tightly clenched the fingers of his right hand under an uncontrollable paroxysm of agony, his hair became damp and glued against his icy forehead, while a sharp spasm contracted his features. Still he continued to drink; only once, he, without removing his lips from the bottle, let it fall a little as though he were endeavouring to take breath. At this instant Jacques encountered the sardonic glance of Morok, who continued to drink with his accustomed imperturbability, and, believing that he read the expression of an insulting triumph in the look bestowed on

of avoiding the loss of time required to pass around the room, she vaulted quickly over, and threw herself on the neck of her lover, wholly unheeding the tamer of beasts, who was standing beside him, exclaiming, "Jacques! Jacques! Look up, 'tis I, — Céphyse!"

The well-known voice, with the cry of distracting agony wrung from the very soul itself, seemed to call back the wandering senses of Couche-tout-Nud, who mechanically turned his head, although without opening his eyes, to the direction from which it proceeded. A deep sigh heaved his chest, his stiffened limbs regained their suppleness, a slight tremor succeeded to the fearful convulsions which had racked his frame, and shortly after, the eyelids being painfully raised, displayed his glazed and vacant orbs.

A feeling of deep curiosity, not unmingled with fear, kept all present in a state of almost breathless astonishment and silence; while Céphyse, kneeling before her unconscious lover, and covering his hands with tears and kisses, cried, in a voice almost stifled by sobs:

"Jacques, dearest Jacques, look upon poor Céphyse, who has found you at last! Ah, believe me, I was not to blame for quitting you. Forgive me, — forgive me, I implore you!"

"Wretched woman!" exclaimed Morok, irritated at a meeting so calculated to frustrate all his plans. "Do you wish to kill him? In a state so dangerous as that in which he now is, any powerful excitement may be fatal. Leave us!"

And, with these words, he grasped Céphyse by the arm, as if about to put her forcibly out of the room, when Jacques, as though awakening from an uneasy dream, began to be cognisant of what was passing around him.

"You! you here?" cried the Queen-Bacchanal, becoming, in utter amazement, aware of the presence of Morok, — "you who separated me from Jacques —" But here

"KNEELING BEFORE HER UNCONSCIOUS LOVER."

she stopped, for the glassy eyes of Couche-tout-Nud, fixing their gaze on her, appeared to sparkle with returning animation.

"Céphyse!" murmured Jacques, "is that you?"

"Yes, yes," eagerly replied the poor girl, in tones of deep affection, "yes, Jacques, 'tis I — Céphyse — come to — tell you —" But unable to proceed, she convulsively clasped her hands together, while the despairing agony impressed on her pale, grief-worn features abundantly testified her surprise and sorrow at the fearful alteration which had taken place in the countenance of Jacques, who, readily interpreting the expression of her face, and the mute sorrow conveyed by her speechless gaze, in his turn contemplated the wasted form and sickly look of Céphyse, saying:

"And you, too, my poor girl, have tasted deeply of misery — and want. I did not recollect you — at first — for you are altered — as well as myself."

"Alas," murmured Céphyse, "I have, indeed, suffered want and misery! and oh," added she, shuddering, while a deep blush suffused her pale countenance, "worse — far worse than that!"

"Worse than want and wretchedness?" cried Jacques, much excited. "What mean you, Céphyse?"

"But 'tis you, dear Jacques, who have endured the most," interrupted Céphyse, without venturing to reply to her lover's question.

"Ay, indeed," replied Jacques; "and a few minutes ago my troubles were well-nigh over; but your voice recalled me — and I returned for an instant to tell you — that we must part, Céphyse, — for here," continued he, laying his hand over his chest, "here is a sure monitor to bid me have no further thoughts of living — but it matters not — I shall die — happy — since I have — seen you — once — more!"

"Don't talk of dying, Jacques. See, here I am beside you, never to leave you more!"

"Listen to me, were there a brasier of burning coals within me, I could not suffer a more devouring flame than that which scorches up my very vitals. I have been now for more than a month daily consuming before a slow fire. And this person," added he, pointing to Morok, "has kindly taken upon him the office of first kindling the fire, and afterwards keeping it well supplied with materials. Not that I regret my life, far from it, — I had totally lost the habit of employing myself, and acquired a taste for nothing but dissipation. So I must have sunk down into a destitute beggar; and, to prevent that, I let my friend here amuse himself by heaping burning coals upon the brasier kindled within me; and since the drink I lately took, I feel persuaded that my inside burns and flames like that bowl of punch there!"

"You are an ungrateful fool!" cried Morok, shrugging up his shoulders; "you held out your glass and I filled it. But come, no more of this nonsense, — I tell you we shall drink many a cup together yet, and laugh at all these foolish fancies in merry days we have yet to see!"

For several minutes Céphyse had never taken her eyes off Morok.

"I tell you," said Jacques, addressing the beast-conqueror in a feeble voice, "that for some time past you have kept the fire burning which has devoured my very vitals. Don't let it be reported that I died of the cholera, or that I was afraid of the part given me to play; neither take it as a reproach to yourself, my tender friend," continued he, with a sarcastic smile, "if I say you have dressed my grave out as gaily as you could. Sometimes, I own that when I have — seen the dark, yawning pit you had taken such pains to dig for me, I have drawn back — and wished to escape falling into it — but you, careful and tender of my interests, which you understood better than I did — forcibly urged me on to the very brink, saying, 'In with you, vagabond! In with you!' and so I allowed myself to be pushed nearer

and nearer to the slippery edge — and now I have reached my journey's end!"

And here Couche-tout-Nud burst into such a wild and unnatural laugh as appeared to freeze all present with horror, while increasing astonishment at the singular scene kept all silent. "Come, come, my lad," said Morok, sternly, "let's have no more of this wild talk, — listen to me, and take my advice."

"Thank you! No, no; I know but too well what your advice leads to; and instead of wasting the few precious moments you have left me in listening to you, I would rather say a few words to my poor Céphyse, and, ere I lie down in the narrow home you have provided for me, unburthen my heart of all its thoughts to one who sincerely loves me."

"Talk not so, Jacques, I beseech you. You know not the pain you cause me," replied Céphyse. "Have I not said you must not — shall not die?"

"Then, my dearest Céphyse, it must be to you I shall owe the preservation of my life," answered Jacques, in a tone of deep emotion, which greatly affected all present; "but," continued Couche-tout-Nud, "when I saw you return to me — so meanly clad — I seemed to feel comfort spring up within my heart, — shall I tell you why? Because I said to myself, 'That poor girl has nobly and courageously kept her word; she has preferred labour, suffering, and privations, rather than accept another lover, who would have bestowed on her — what I gave — as long as I had the means. And the very thoughts of your firmness and constancy, Céphyse, seemed to cool and refresh my very soul; and, indeed, I needed some such comfort, for I was burning, and still I burn," continued he, his hands clenched in agony. "But that thought seemed to take away all my suffering, and to promise peace and happiness after all my sufferings, — this blessed hope I owe to you, my good, my noble Céphyse. Blessings on you, for your steady adherence to your word.

In preserving your faith, you have, perhaps, saved poor Jacques's life; but, my brave and truehearted girl, take this for your reward, — I have never loved anything in the world but yourself; and if, in my past days of brutalised pleasure, I had one idea above the degradation in which I was plunged, one regret at not being a better and more respectable character than I had become, it was always when I thought of you, my beloved Céphyse. Again and again, then, let me thank you, my poor girl," said Jacques, whose burning eyes were moistened with tears of fond affection, "let me thank and bless you, my first and only love, for the noble proof you have given of your steady affection, and if I die," added he, extending his already icy hand to Céphyse, "I shall die happy; and if I live, I will strive to make amends for every tear you have shed for me — Give me your hand, my Céphyse — your hand — my faithful, truehearted girl!"

But, instead of taking the hand so affectionately proffered, Céphyse, still kneeling beside Jacques, bent down her head, and durst not so much as look at her lover.

"Céphyse!" articulated Jacques, with difficulty; "what is the meaning of this? You do not answer me — neither do you take my hand!"

But, bowed down with a crushing sense of her own shame, the unfortunate girl could only reply by stifled sobs, while the humility of her supplicating attitude brought her forehead almost level with her lover's feet.

Struck with indefinable uneasiness at the conduct and silence of the Queen-Bacchanal, Jacques gazed on her with rapidly increasing surprise; then, as a rapid spasm played over his deathlike features, and his pale lips trembled, he said, almost gaspingly:

"Céphyse, I know you too well — not to be sure — that if you do not take my hand — it is — because — " Then, his voice utterly failing him, he paused for several minutes; after which, in a low, hoarse tone, he said,

"When I was put in prison, six weeks ago — you said to me, 'Jacques, I vow to you, by all we hold dear, that I will earn my bread by honest labour, whatever want or misery I may experience — I swear to you to keep myself from all harm' — you promised me this. Now, you have never deceived me in your life — and if you say — you have kept your promise — I will believe you."

Céphyse could reply only by a heartbroken sob, while she convulsively pressed the knees of Jacques to her throbbing bosom.

Strange inconsistency, yet more common than may be supposed, this man, brutalised by drunkenness and excess who, since his coming out of prison had, from one species of debauch to another, blindly accepted all the murderous invitations of Morok, now felt his death-blow in learning, from the mute confession of Céphyse, the infidelity of the being he had so passionately loved, spite of the former degradation of her life, which she had by no means concealed from him.

The first impulse of Jacques was terrible. Spite of his pains and weakness, he managed to raise himself on his feet, then, with a face contracted by rage and despair, he threw himself forward, so as to seize a knife from the table, and aim it at Céphyse; but, just as about to strike, his better feelings returned, and, shrinking from the thoughts of murder, he threw the knife away, and falling back, perfectly exhausted, into his chair, he covered his face with his hands.

At the cry of Nini-Moulin, who somewhat tardily had sprung forward to wrest the knife from Couche-tout-Nud, Céphyse raised her head. The heartstricken suffering depicted in the countenance of her lover smote her to the heart, and, rising, she threw herself, spite of Jacques's resistance, on his shoulder, sobbing forth in bitter distress:

"Jacques, if you but knew, if you only knew all I could tell you! Listen to me, dearest Jacques; do not con-

demn me without hearing me — I will tell you all — yes, on my word, the whole truth; and that man," continued she, pointing to Morok, "will not dare contradict what I say. He came to me, and said, 'Have courage to —'"

"I reproach you not; I have no right to do so. Let me die in peace, — that is all I — ask of you — now," murmured Jacques, in a voice more and more feeble, as he still repulsed Céphyse; then added, with a bitter, cutting smile, "Fortunately I have what I played for; I knew well — what I was about — when I accepted the duel with brandy."

"No, no," cried Céphyse, wildly, "you shall not die — you shall hear my justification, and every one else shall hear it. It will then be seen whether it is my fault, or whether I deserve to be pitied — will it not?" continued she, almost frantically addressing herself to the curious and really sympathising spectators, — "and you kind, good people, will implore Jacques to pardon me, if, urged by starvation, and unable to obtain work, I have been obliged to sell myself, not for luxuries, — oh, no — you see the rags I wear, — but to provide a shelter and a morsel of bread for my poor sick sister — my sister, dying for want, and even more wretched than myself; surely, surely I deserve pity for being thus driven to misery, though some will say, perhaps," continued the girl, bursting into a wild and frenzied laugh, "that there is a pleasure in selling oneself for money." Then, shuddering with horror, she continued, in an almost inaudible voice, "Oh, if you could but know, Jacques, all the infamy, the loathing disgust of thus stooping to dishonour for vile pay, you would pity me. I would rather a thousand times die than return to such a life. I was going to drown myself when I learned that you were here — " Then, perceiving Jacques, who was rapidly sinking, and obliged to be supported by Nini-Moulin, mournfully shake his head, without attempting to make her any reply, she clasped her supplicating hands, and cried:

"Jacques — for mercy's sake — one word of pity and forgiveness. Oh, pardon — pardon!"

"Gentlemen, for goodness' sake, drive this woman out of the room!" exclaimed Morok; "the sight of her most painfully agitates my poor friend here."

"Come, my good girl, be persuaded," said several of the party, deeply affected with all they had witnessed, and trying to remove Céphyse; "leave the poor fellow alone! Come away with us; he is in no sort of danger."

"Gentlemen, kind-hearted gentlemen," cried the miserable being, raising her imploring hands in earnest supplication, "only listen to me — only permit me to tell you! I will do whatever you wish me; I will go away; but, for the love of Heaven, send for assistance; do not let him die in this way. See, see, gracious God, what tortures he suffers! His convulsions are most dreadful."

"She is right," said one of the party, hastening towards the door; "he must have instant help. Let us send off for a doctor."

"There is no probability of finding any medical man at home," replied another; "they are all so much occupied now."

"Then I'll tell you what we will do," said a third person. "The Hôtel Dieu is just opposite; let us carry the poor fellow there; he will then receive the best possible attendance. One of the flaps from this table will serve to carry him on, and the table-cloth will do instead of a sheet to cover him."

"The very thing!" shouted several voices. "Let us carry him there, and then quit this ill-fated house."

Jacques, internally destroyed by the immense quantities of brandy he had lately taken, and utterly overpowered by his distressing interview with Céphyse, had fallen back into a violent nervous attack; he writhed in the most direful agonies, and it was necessary to tie

him on to the part of the table which served him as a litter by means of the table-cloth, and in that pitiable condition he was borne by two of the late guests to the Hôtel Dieu.

Céphyse, who had wildly prayed as a last favour to be allowed to accompany Jacques to the hospital, was permitted to walk beside the dying man.

No sooner had this mournful party quitted the restaurant, than there was a general scramble among the remaining guests, both male and female, to wrap themselves up in their cloaks so as to conceal their costumes, and hurry to their respective vehicles, which, having been ordered against the return of the masqueraders, were fortunately in waiting. The defiance had been fully carried out, and, the audacious bravado accomplished, all concerned in it were at liberty to march out with all the honours of war.

While some of the party still remained in the supper-room at the restaurant, a clamour, at first distant, but which drew rapidly nearer, resounded from the *parvis* Notre-Dame with incredible fury.

Jacques having been carried down to the outer door of the tavern, Morok and Nini-Moulin preceded the hastily arranged litter for the purpose of endeavouring to open a passage through the crowd; but quickly a violent reflux of the moving mass there assembled obliged them to halt, while a redoubled wild and furious clamour resounded from the other extremity of the square, at the corner of the church.

"What has happened?" inquired Nini-Moulin of a mean, ill-looking man, who was indulging in various jumps and skips, as though exulting in some great triumph; "what is the meaning of those cries? Can you tell me?"

"Oh, they've caught a poisoner, and they are serving him out, as they did the one whose body they have just flung into the water," replied the man. "If you want to

see the fun, follow me," continued he, "and work your elbows well, or you'll never get through this crowd."

Scarcely had the unfeeling wretch uttered these words, than a wild, distracting cry was heard even above all the uproar of the crowd, which was penetrated with much difficulty by those who bore the litter on which lay stretched poor Jacques. This broken-hearted wail had burst from the lips of Céphyse. Jacques, one of the seven heirs of the Rennepont family, had just expired in her arms!

Singular coincidence — at the very instant when the distracting shriek of Céphyse announced the death of Jacques, another scream, another cry of agony, arose from the neighbourhood of the *parvis* Notre-Dame, where the populace were putting to death a poisoner of the waters!

This latter and more distant cry, which expressed all the palpitating horror of a man struggling for life or death in the hands of his murderers, beneath whose blows he finally expires, froze Morok (who had been walking before the litter of Couche-tout-Nud) with terror in the midst of the horrible triumph he was then exulting in.

"Hell and the devil!" exclaimed the expert assassin, who had employed as his homicidal weapons the legal arms of drunkenness and debauch. "Hell and all its fiends! That is the voice of the Abbé d'Aigrigny whom the people are massacring!"

CHAPTER XIII.

THE POISONER.

A FEW words are requisite in order to bring the narrative up to the point where the cry of distress uttered by the Abbé d'Aigrigny had made so forcible an impression on Morok at the very moment when Jacques Rennepont had just breathed his last.

The scenes we are about to depict are atrocious. If we could venture to hope that they would ever convey instruction, this frightful sketch would tend, by the horror which it may perchance inspire, to prevent those excesses of a monstrous barbarity to which sometimes an ignorant and blind mob is impelled, when, imbued with the most fatal misconceptions, it allows itself to be impelled headlong by the most inexcusable ferocity.

We have already said that the most absurd and alarming reports were circulating in Paris. Not only were there rumours of poisoning the sick and the public fountains, but it was also asserted that wretches had been detected in throwing arsenic into the pitchers which the wine-merchants usually employ and keep filled and ready on their counters.

Goliath was coming to meet Morok, after having carried a message to P. d'Aigrigny, who awaited him in a house in the Place de l'Archevêché.

Goliath had gone into a wine-shop in the Rue de la Calandre to get some refreshment, and, after having

drunk two glasses of wine, tendered his money in payment.

Whilst the woman in the shop was looking for the change due to him, Goliath leaned his hand mechanically and very innocently over the mouth of a pitcher that was close to him.

The large stature of this man, his repulsive appearance, his savage look, had already made the woman uneasy, alarmed and anxious as she had been rendered at the general rumours as to the poisoners; and when she saw Goliath place his hand over the top of one of her pitchers she exclaimed, with terror, "Ah! why, you have put something in the pitcher!"

At these words, spoken loudly and in a frightened tone, two or three persons who had been drinking at a table rose suddenly, ran to the counter, and one of them exclaimed incautiously:

"He is a poisoner!"

Goliath, ignorant of the sinister reports spread in the vicinity, could not at first comprehend the charge laid against him, the drinkers raising their voices still more loudly whilst they attacked him; and he, relying on his strength, shrugged his shoulders disdainfully, and in brutal tones asked for his change from the woman, who, pale and agitated, did not think about giving it to him.

"Villain!" exclaimed one of the men with so much violence that several passers-by stopped, "you shall have your money when you say what you have put into the pitcher."

"What! Has he thrown something into a pitcher?" asked a spectator.

"Perhaps he is a poisoner!" said another.

"He should be apprehended," added a third.

"Yes, yes," said the party who had been drinking, — very worthy fellows perhaps, but at this moment under the influence of the general panic, — "yes, he should be

apprehended; he has been surprised whilst throwing poison into a pitcher on the counter."

The words "He is a poisoner!" circulated rapidly amongst the crowd, which, at first formed of three or four persons, increased every moment at the wine-shop door. Low and threatening clamours commenced. The man who had made the accusation, seeing his fears thus participated in and almost justified, believed that he was doing the duty of a good and bold citizen when he seized Goliath by the collar and said:

"You villain! Come and account for your conduct at the guard-house."

The giant, already very much irritated at the attacks, of whose real meaning he was ignorant, was exasperated at this sudden attack, and, giving way to his natural brutality, he flung his adversary on the counter and began to pommel him.

During this fray several bottles and two or three squares of glass were broken with much noise; whilst the woman of the shop, more and more alarmed, cried with all her might:

"Help! The poisoner! The villain! Guard!"

At the loud noise of the broken glasses and cries of distress, the passers-by all stopped and increased the mob, many of whom gave full credence to the poisoners, and many of them rushed into the shop to aid the men who had assailed Goliath. Thanks to his herculean strength, after a short struggle against seven or eight persons, he had thrown down the most desperate two of them, scattered the others, and going up to the counter he gave himself a vigorous impetus, and then rushed head foremost like a bull, fighting against the crowd at the door; then, completing the passage by aid of his enormous shoulders and athletic arms, he cleared a way through the mob, and ran with all his strength towards the façade of Notre-Dame, with his clothes torn, his head uncovered, and his countenance ghastly and enraged.

A number of the persons who formed the crowd instantly commenced the pursuit of Goliath, and a hundred voices exclaimed:

"Stop him! Stop him! Stop the poisoner!"

At the sound of these cries and the sight of a man rushing along with wild looks and formidable appearance, a butcher's lad who chanced to be passing with a large empty tray threw it exactly between the legs of Goliath, who stumbled over the unexpected obstacle, and fell to the ground; while the butcher, believing himself engaged in an action as meritorious as would have been the slaying of a mad dog, threw himself on his fallen foe and rolled with him into the street, crying out:

"Help, help! Here is a poisoner! Help!"

All this occurred at a short distance from the cathedral, not far from the crowd collected at the door of the Hôtel Dieu and the house of the restaurant, into which the masquerade of the cholera had entered about the close of the day.

The loud summons of the butcher was answered by a rush of persons, among whom were Ciboule and the quarrier, towards the scene of strife; while the various groups who had pursued the pretended poisoner from the Rue de la Calandre came up at this moment to the place where the object of their wrath lay struggling with his opponent.

At the sight of this formidable crowd all rushing towards him, Goliath, while seeking to defend himself against his assailant, who clung to him with the tenacity of a bulldog, felt that his destruction was certain, unless he contrived to free himself from his adversary; with one furious blow of his fist he smashed the jaw-bone of the butcher, who happened at that instant to be uppermost, and thus, freeing himself from his strong gripe, rose, and, still sick and giddy, hurried onwards. But suddenly he paused,—further flight was impossible;

the infuriated mob had hemmed him in on all sides.

Behind him rose the walls of the cathedral, around gleamed the threatening countenances of a hostile multitude; while the rage of the assembled crowd was still further excited by the agonising shrieks of the unfortunate butcher, who had just been raised bleeding from the ground.

This was a terrible moment for Goliath, who found himself standing alone in a space each second rendered smaller and smaller, and saw around him an angry host thirsting for vengeance on his imaginary crime, and loudly denouncing death as his inevitable punishment.

Thus a wild boar, when at bay, will turn and turn again, as though undecided whether to make a stand against the savage pack by whom he is beset. So Goliath, breathless with fear, ran here and there in a wild, uncertain manner; but quickly perceiving at once the utter impossibility of flight, or the hopelessness of finding either pity or mercy from an enraged mob carried away by a blind and deaf fury, — the more unrelenting as it was believed to be legitimate vengeance, — determined at least to sell his life as dearly as possible, Goliath felt in his pocket for his knife, but, not finding it, he bent his left leg in an attitude for wrestling, extended before him his brawny arms, hard and rigid as iron, and, planting his foot firmly on the ground, he resolutely awaited the attack.

The first person who approached him was Ciboule, who, panting with eagerness and out of breath with the rapid pace she had run, instead of at once springing at him, stopped, and, stooping down, took off one of her heavy wooden shoes, and threw it so vigorously and skilfully at the head of the giant that it took aim at his eye, which it forced, bleeding nearly, from its socket.

Uttering a cry of intense agony, Goliath put up his hands to his injured countenance.

"Well, I've spoiled his beauty!" bawled Ciboule, bursting into a loud fit of savage laughter; "he'll squint for life, and no mistake!"

Rendered furious by the torture he endured, instead of waiting the commencement of the attack from his assailants, who, intimidated by his herculean strength, seemed reluctant to begin (the quarrier, who alone would have been an equal match for him, having been drawn back by a movement of the crowd), Goliath in his rage threw himself on all those near him.

The combat was, however, too unequal to last long; but, despair redoubling the strength of the giant, the conflict was for a time most dreadful. The unhappy wretch held out with incredible courage and resolution, at times wholly lost beneath the swarm of bloodthirsty foes by whom he was assailed, then exhibiting one of his ponderous arms lifted high in air, and falling again with all the strength of a smith's hammer on the skulls and faces of his antagonists.

In a brief space of time his pale, bleeding, and enormous head would tower above the host of vindictive foes, to be pulled back by some daring combatant, who contrived to reach him by seizing a handful of the thick, frizzly hair which ornamented his huge countenance.

Continual movements, rapid jostling, trampling, and swaying to and fro of the frenzied mob, gave evidence of the indomitable energy with which Goliath conducted his defence; but the quarrier having now come up, he was overpowered and thrown down. A wild, prolonged shout of savage triumph announced the giant's destruction, for, in such circumstances, to fall is to die.

Scarcely had the cry ceased, than it was replaced by one universal clamour of —

"Death, death to the wretch who has tried to poison us! Kill him, kill him!" And then commenced one of those scenes of massacre and torture worthy of cannibalism itself, attended with horrors so much the more

incredible as they had for spectators, either passive or active, men among whom were many ordinarily humane and just towards each other, but who, led away either by ignorant or ill-founded opinions or prejudices, allowed themselves to be mixed up with the commission of the most frightful barbarities, under the impression that they were merely performing an act of justice.

And, acting under these impulses, the sight of the blood which streamed in torrents from Goliath's numerous injuries served but to increase the savage fury of the maddened crowd, and to excite them to the unflinching discharge of their sanguinary task, which they considered as just retribution.

A hundred arms were raised against him, he was trampled under feet, his features beaten in, his breast stamped on and torn; and amid the loud and brutal yells of "Kill the poisoner, show him no mercy!" might be distinguished heavy blows, followed by deep groans. Then commenced an indiscriminate onslaught. Each person present, as though seized with a murderous craving, pressed forward to deal some blow, or to tear wider the bleeding, gaping wounds; even females — yes, women — mothers with their infants at their breast, struggled and disputed for the opportunity of cutting or gashing the huge body of the expiring giant, as it lay in a pool of blood. Men and women, as though influenced by some demoniac fury, threw themselves with insatiate rage on the mutilated frame.

A terrible moment followed. Goliath, his face bruised, battered, and covered with mud, his garments in rags, his breast naked, torn, and bleeding, — profiting by a momentary pause on the part of his executioners, who believed they had finished him, — managed, during one of those convulsive starts so frequent during the last parting agony of body and soul, to raise himself for a few seconds on his feet; but, blinded by his wounds, he continued wildly to throw his arms about, as though

parrying blows which were no longer aimed at him ; and, as the blood poured in streams from his pallid lips, he managed faintly to murmur:

"Mercy, mercy, — I am no poisoner, — mercy!"

This unexpected resurrection produced so electric an effect on the crowd, that for an instant it drew back with affright. The fierce clamours ceased, and a small space was left around their victim. Some even began to commiserate him, when the quarrier, perceiving Goliath, blinded by blood, stretch forth his hands in all directions, exclaimed, in allusion to a well-known game played by the workmen of Paris, "*Casse cou*" (break neck); then, striking the unfortunate man a violent blow with his foot in the stomach, he threw him down again with such violence, that his head rebounded twice on the pavement. At the moment when the giant fell heavily, a voice in the crowd called out:

"'Tis Goliath! Stop, — the man is innocent!"

Père d'Aigrigny (it was he), yielding to a generous sentiment, made violent efforts to reach the first rank of the actors in this scene; and having attained it, he said, pale, indignant, and menacing:

"You are cowards, assassins! This man is innocent, — I know him. You shall answer for his life!"

A loud clamour hailed these vehement words of Père d'Aigrigny.

"You know this poisoner!" exclaimed the quarrier, seizing the Jesuit by the collar. "Then perhaps you are a poisoner yourself."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Père d'Aigrigny, trying to release himself from the quarrier's gripe, "dare you lay hands on me?"

"Yes, I dare anything!" replied the quarrier.

"He knows him, — then he is a poisoner, too, like the other!" they exclaimed in the crowd, which was pressing around the two adversaries; whilst Goliath, who in his fall had fractured his skull, uttered a dying groan of agony.

At a sudden jerk by which Père d'Aigrigny had shaken off the quarrier, a tolerably large glass bottle, very thick, of a peculiar form, and filled with a dark greenish liquor, fell from his pocket, and rolled close to the dead body of Goliath.

At the sight of this bottle, several voices cried out:

"It is poison, — look there! See, he carries the poison about with him!"

At this accusation the cries redoubled; and they began to press so closely on the Abbé d'Aigrigny that he exclaimed:

"Do not touch me — do not come so close upon me."

"If he is a poisoner," said the voice, "there's no more allowance for him than for the other."

"I, a poisoner!" exclaimed the abbé, aghast at the accusation.

Ciboule had picked up the bottle; the quarrier seized it, took out the cork, and said to Père d'Aigrigny, holding it towards him:

"Ah, what is in it?"

"That is not poison," exclaimed Père d'Aigrigny.

"Then drink it!" replied the quarrier.

"Yes, yes, make him drink it!" exclaimed the mob.

"Never!" said Père d'Aigrigny, with alarm; and he retreated, pushing the bottle from him with his hand.

"You see, it's poison, he dare not drink it," they said, and, pressed upon and hemmed in on all sides, Père d'Aigrigny stumbled over Goliath's body.

"My friends," exclaimed the Jesuit, who, without being a poisoner, still found himself in a terrible alternative, for his bottle contained some salts of great pungency, as dangerous to drink as poison, "my worthy friends, you mistake — in our Lord's name I swear to you!"

"If it is not poison, drink it!" said the quarrier, again presenting the bottle to the Jesuit.

"If you don't drink it, you shall die like your comrade, since, like him, you poison the people."

"Yes, death to him! Death!"

"But, wretches," cried Père d'Aigrigny, his hair bristling with terror, "would you then assassinate me?"

"What do you think of all those whom you and your comrade have poisoned, you villains?"

"That is not true, and —"

"Drink, then!" repeated the inflexible quarrier. "For the last time, will you or won't you?"

"Drink that — why, it would be death!"[1] exclaimed Père d'Aigrigny.

"Ah, do you hear the scoundrel?" replied the crowd, which became even more dense; "he owns it — he owns it!"

"He has betrayed himself!"

"He said, 'Drink it — why, it is death!'"

"But hear me!" exclaimed the abbé, clasping his hands; "it is —"

Furious cries interrupted Père d'Aigrigny.

"Ciboule, finish that one!" exclaimed the quarrier, kicking Goliath. "I'll begin with this one!" And he seized Père d'Aigrigny by the throat.

At these words two groups were formed. One, headed by Ciboule, "finished" Goliath with kicks, stones, blows of wooden shoes, etc., until very speedily the body was nothing but a horrible, mutilated, nameless, shapeless thing, — an inert mass, covered with mud, and but a heap of bruised and pulpy flesh.

Ciboule gave her shawl, which they tied to one of the broken legs of the carcass, and then dragged it to the parapet on the Quai; and there, amidst cries of savage ferocity, they cast the mangled and bleeding remains into the river.

[1] This is a historical fact; a man was massacred because they found on him a bottle filled with ammonia. On his refusal to drink it, the populace, persuaded that it was poison, rent the unhappy man limb from limb.

One shudders to think that in a time of popular commotion a word suffices — a single word incautiously uttered by an honest man, without any premeditated malice — to excite such a horrible murder.

"Perhaps he is a poisoner!"

This was what the man said in the wine-shop in the Rue de la Calandre — no more — and Goliath was ruthlessly murdered.

What imperious reasons why instruction and information should spread to the deepest darkness of the million, and thus place many ignorant persons in a position to defend themselves from so many stupid prejudices, so many fatal superstitions, so many implacable fanaticisms! How can we expect calmness, reflection, self-control, a sense of justice, from abandoned creatures whom ignorance has brutalised, misery depraved, suffering enraged, and for whom society only concerns itself when it is a question of chaining them at the galleys, or binding them for the executioner?

The terrible cry which had alarmed Morok was that uttered by the Abbé d'Aigrigny when the quarrier had laid his heavy hand on him, and said to Ciboule, as he pointed to the expiring Goliath, "You finish that one! I'll begin with this one!"

CHAPTER XIV.

THE CATHEDRAL.

THE night had nearly arrived when the mutilated carcass of Goliath was precipitated into the river.

The agitation of the crowd had impelled towards the streets which run down by the left side of the cathedral the party in whose power the Père d'Aigrigny was retained. He had contrived to disengage himself from the strong gripe of the quarrier, but was still surrounded and pressed upon by the multitude, which hemmed him in and cried, "Death to the poisoner!" Whilst he was retreating step by step, and endeavouring to parry the blows aimed at him, by dint of self-possession, address, and courage, summoning, too, his former military energy, he had contrived to resist and remain on his feet, knowing, from the fatal example of Goliath, that to fall was to die.

Although he had but very faint hopes of being heard, the abbé called out with all his might for help, yielding the ground inch by inch, and manœuvring, so as to draw near one of the lateral walls of the church, he contrived to reach a corner formed by the projection of a pillar which was close to a small door.

This position was so far favourable to the Père d'Aigrigny, that, finding himself with his back to the wall, he was partially sheltered from the attacks made upon him. But the quarrier, determined to deprive him of even this last chance of safety, rushed upon him in order to grasp and drag him into the midst of the mob, where he would

be inevitably trampled under foot; but the terror of death gave an extraordinary strength to Père d'Aigrigny, and he still was able to resist with effect the attempts of the quarrier, and remain protected by the angle in which he had ensconced himself.

The resistance of the victim redoubled the rage of the assailants, and cries of death resounded with resumed violence.

The quarrier again darted on the Père d'Aigrigny, exclaiming:

"Help, my lads! This has lasted too long already. Let's end this!"

Père d'Aigrigny saw that he was lost.

His strength was exhausted, and he felt himself becoming weaker and weaker. His legs trembled under him, a mist came over his eyes, and the sounds of the howling of these furious wretches were beginning to sound but faintly in his ears. The pain of several violent contusions, received during the struggle, on his head and his chest particularly, now became most poignant, and twice or thrice an effusion of blood stained his lips. His position was, indeed, desperate.

"To die! Struck down by these brutes, after having escaped death so often in the field of war!"

Such was the Abbé d'Aigrigny's thought as the quarrier dashed upon him.

Suddenly, and at the moment when the abbé, yielding to the instinct of self-preservation, called again for help in a tone of deepest agony, the door against which he leaned opened behind him, a strong hand grasped him and drew him suddenly into the church.

Owing to this movement, effected with the rapidity of lightning, the quarrier, who had rushed forwards to seize on the Père d'Aigrigny, could not check his impetus, and thus found himself face to face with the personage who had, as it were, come to substitute himself for the victim.

The quarrier checked himself suddenly, then receded a couple of paces, amazed, like the rest of the crowd, at this sudden apparition, and, like the crowd, smitten with a vague feeling of admiration and respect at the sight of him who had so miraculously arrived to succour the Père d'Aigrigny.

It was Gabriel.

The young missionary remained standing erect at the threshold of the door.

His long black cassock formed a strong outline in the deep shade formed by the dim twilight of the cathedral, whilst his archangelic face, encompassed by long and fair hair, pale and agitated with pity and grief, was softly lighted up by the last rays of the departing day.

His features were resplendent with such divine beauty — expressed such touching and tender compassion — that the multitude felt moved when Gabriel, with his large blue eyes, humid with tears, and his hands upraised, exclaimed, in a full and tremulous voice:

"Mercy, my brothers! Be humane, be just!"

Recovering from his first movement of surprise and his involuntary emotion, the quarrier advanced a step towards Gabriel, crying:

"No mercy to a poisoner! We want him, so let's have him, or we'll fetch him ourselves."

"Can you think of such a thing, my brethren?" answered Gabriel; "in this church — a sacred place — a place of refuge for all who are persecuted!"

"We will lay hands on the poisoner even at the very foot of the altar," replied the quarrier, brutally. "So give him up!"

"My friends, listen to me," said Gabriel, stretching forth his arms.

"Down with the shaveling!" exclaimed the quarrier; "the poisoner is hiding himself in the church. Let's go in."

"Yes, yes," shouted the mob, again excited by the violence of this wretch. "Down with the monk!"

"They understand each other!"

"Down with the monks!"

"Let's enter here as we did at the archbishop's!"

"As at St. Germain l'Auxerrois!"

"What do we care about a church!"

"If the shavelings defend the poisoners, then let's fling the shavelings into the river!"

"Yes, yes!"

"I'll show you the way!"

So saying, the quarrier, followed by Ciboule and a considerable number of resolute fellows, advanced towards Gabriel.

The missionary observing, for some moments, the reviving ferocity of the crowd, had foreseen this movement, and, retreating suddenly within the church, he contrived, in despite of the efforts of his assailants, to keep the door almost closed, and barricaded it as well as he could by means of a wooden bar, one end of which he placed on the floor, and the other under the projection of one of the transverse planks, and, thanks to this kind of buttress, the door might resist for some minutes.

Whilst Gabriel defended the entry thus, he called out to Père d'Aigrigny:

"Fly, father, fly by the sacristy, — all the other issues are closed."

The Jesuit, half dead, covered with bruises, bathed in cold perspiration, feeling his strength leave him rapidly, and believing himself in safety, had thrown himself into a chair almost senseless.

At Gabriel's voice the abbé rose with difficulty, and with a staggering step endeavoured to reach the choir, separated by a grating from the rest of the church.

"Quick, father!" added Gabriel, with affright, and keeping closed, with all his might, the door so vigorously besieged; "make haste! Oh, make haste, or in a minute

or two it will be too late!" Then the missionary added, with despair, "And to be alone, alone to check the progress of these infuriated beings!"

And he was indeed alone.

At the first noise of the attack, three or four sacristans, and other persons employed in the fabric, were in the church, but these fellows becoming alarmed, when they recollected the sack of the archbishop's at St. Germain l'Auxerrois, had instantly taken flight; some concealing themselves in the organ-lofts, to which they rapidly ascended, others escaping by the sacristy, the doors of which they fastened inside, thus cutting off all means of retreat from Gabriel and the Père d'Aigrigny.

The latter, bent double with pain, on hearing the urgent entreaties of the missionary, made vain endeavours, by means of the chairs which he found in his way, to reach the grate of the choir. After a few steps, overcome by emotion and suffering, he staggered, reeled, and fell on the stones entirely bereft of sense.

At the same moment, Gabriel, in spite of the incredible energy with which the desire of saving the Père d'Aigrigny had inspired him, felt the door at length giving way before a desperate effort to burst it open, and on the point of being forced.

Then turning his head to convince himself that the Jesuit had been enabled to quit the church, Gabriel was aghast when he saw him extended and motionless a few paces from the choir.

To leave the half broken door, run to Père d'Aigrigny, raise him up, and drag him within the grating of the choir, was for Gabriel an action as rapid as thought, and he closed the grating at the very instant when the quarrier and his band, after having burst in the door, precipitated themselves headlong into the church.

Erect, and inside the choir, his hands folded over his breast, Gabriel awaited, calm and intrepid, for this mob, exasperated as it was by an unexpected resistance.

The door was driven in, the assailants poured in violently, but hardly had they entered the church than a singular scene occurred.

Night had come. A few silver lamps threw their faint light into the centre of the sanctuary, of which the aisles were lost in the deepening shadows.

After their sudden entry into this immense, sombre, silent, and deserted cathedral, the boldest was suddenly overcome, almost afraid, in presence of the imposing grandeur of this solitude of stone.

Cries and menaces expired on the lips of the most ferocious, and it seemed as though they were fearful of awakening the echoes of those enormous vaults, — those black arches, which gave out a sepulchral moisture, which chilled their anger-inflamed brows, and fell on them with the heaviness of lead.

Religious tradition, custom, the habits or remembrances of infancy, have such influence on men, that scarcely had most of the quarrier's companions entered than they respectfully took off their hats, bowed their bare heads, and moved with precaution in order to deaden, as much as possible, their footsteps on the sounding pavement.

Then some exchanged a few words in a low and frightened tone. Others, looking timidly up to the immeasurable height of the top beams of this gigantic structure, then all but lost in obscurity, felt almost alarmed at seeing themselves so small in the midst of this immensity thus filled with darkness.

But at the first rude jest of the quarrier, who broke this respectful silence, the feeling soon passed away.

"Ah, ah, thousand thunders!" he exclaimed. "What, are we waiting for breath to chant vespers? If there was but some wine in the holy water trough, that would be the thing."

Some bursts of brutal laughter hailed these words.

"During this time that scoundrel has escaped us," said one.

"And we are cheated," added Ciboule.

"One would think there were cowards here, and that they were afraid of the sacristans," continued the quarrier.

"Never!" exclaimed a burst of voices. "No, no, we are not afraid of anybody."

"Forward!"

"Yes, forward, forward!" was the reply on all sides.

And the animation, which had grown calm for a moment, redoubled in the midst of the renewed tumult.

A few moments afterwards, the eyes of the assailants, grown accustomed to this gloom, distinguished in the midst of the pale rays of light projected by a silver lamp the imposing figure of Gabriel, erect, and standing without the grate of the choir.

"The poisoner is hid in some corner here," cried the quarrier. "We must make the curate give the vagabond up to us."

"He shall answer for him."

"It was he who enabled him to take refuge in the church."

"He shall pay for both if we do not find the other."

In proportion as the first impression of involuntary respect felt by the crowd was dissipated, voices grew louder, and countenances became fiercer and more menacing as each began to be ashamed of his moment's hesitation and weakness.

"Yes, yes," exclaimed many voices trembling with anger, "we will have the life of one or the other."

"Or of both."

"So much the worse; why does this shaven crown hinder us from finishing our poisoner?"

"Death, death!"

At this burst of savage shouts, which resounded fearfully in the midst of the vast vaults of the cathedral,

the mob, drunk with rage, rushed towards the grating of the choir, at the entrance to which Gabriel stood.

The young missionary, who, hung on a cross by the savages of the Rocky Mountains, still prayed the Lord to forgive his executioners, had too much right courage, too much charity, not to risk his life a thousand times to save Père d'Aigrigny, — that man who had deceived him with such base, such cruel hypocrisy.

CHAPTER XV.

THE MURDERERS.

THE quarrier, followed by his band, rushed towards Gabriel, who had advanced still more in the front of the grating of the choir, exclaiming, with eyes sparkling with rage:

"Where is the poisoner? We must and will have him!"

"And who told you he was a poisoner, my brothers?" replied Gabriel, in his penetrating and finely modulated voice. "Where are the proofs, the witnesses of his guilt, where the victims of his crime?"

"Enough of talking," answered the quarrier, brutally, and walking towards Gabriel with a threatening air; "we did not come here to confess. Give us up the man we want; he must and he shall come out of his hiding-place, or you shall pay for him!"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed a loud burst of voices; "that will be but fair."

"Ah, they are accomplices, no doubt," cried others.

"Well, then, we'll have one or other!"

"Then, behold me ready to resign myself into your hands!" said Gabriel, raising his head, and advancing with a calmness mingled with resignation and majesty. "Him or me,—you care not which? You only desire to shed blood — take mine! and with it my free pardon; for, oh, my brethren, a fearful delirium troubles your reason."

These words, the courage displayed by Gabriel, the

noble grace of his attitude, with the extreme beauty of his countenance, made a lively impression on several of the assailants, when suddenly a voice cried out:

"Come on, come on, comrades, the poisoner is there — hid behind the grating."

"Where, where?" screamed a full chorus of exulting voices.

"There, there! Don't you see, — stretched full length on the floor?"

At this announcement, the persons composing the formidable party, evidently acting under the control of the quarrier, and which had hitherto remained in dense masses on either side of the aisle where the chairs are usually placed, began now to disperse themselves rapidly, so as to find a means of entering into the choir, the last and only defence of the Abbé d'Aigrigny.

While this was going on, the quarrier, Ciboule, and several others advanced towards Gabriel, saying, with brutal triumph:

"Ha, ha! we have got him this time! Death to the poisoner!"

To save the life of D'Aigrigny, Gabriel would have allowed himself to be massacred where he stood, but farther on the grating, which was there scarcely four feet in height, might be scaled in an instant by these desperate men, or even torn down in their mad fury.

All hope, therefore, of preserving the Jesuit from a violent death faded from the mind of the young missionary; still, as a last effort, he exclaimed:

"Stop, rash and unthinking men!" throwing himself, as he spoke, with extended hands before the insensate crowd.

His voice, his gesture, and the expression of his countenance displayed at once an authority so tender and brotherlike that a momentary hesitation appeared to seize the different actors in this wild outrage; it was, however, but a temporary lull of their angry passions,

and was quickly succeeded by cries and yells of even a more threatening character:

"Let him die! Kill him! No mercy for a poisoner!"

"You have resolved upon his death?" said Gabriel, becoming ghastly pale.

"We have! We have!"

"Well, then," cried the missionary, seized with a sudden inspiration, "let him die, die on the instant!"

The astonished crowd gazed with mute wonder on the young priest as he pronounced these words, and for several instants the fierce set of men, by whom he was surrounded, remained silent and motionless, as though paralysed with exceeding and stupefying surprise.

"The man you say is guilty," continued the young missionary, in a voice trembling with emotion. "True, you have adjudged him so, without either proofs or witnesses; but still you doom him to death. You accuse him of being a poisoner, — where are his victims? You know not. But what matters, since you have already decided upon his fate? You refuse even to grant him the privilege of pleading his innocence, and of clearing himself of these odious charges. Still, it could do him no good, since you have pronounced sentence of death upon him, — making yourselves at once his accusers, judges, and executioners. So be it. Remember, the individual whose blood you wish to shed is wholly unknown to you. You have never even seen him. He has never done you the least harm; for aught you know, he may not have injured others more than he has done yourselves, and yet, in the presence of your fellow creatures, you take upon yourselves the fearful responsibility of putting him to death — to death! You must not forget the awful consequences involved in that word, my brethren! If, then, your consciences absolve you of all blame, let it be as you will. I would fain hope, for your soul's sake, this man's blood may never rise against you. He is condemned by you to die, and

that dreadful deed will be accomplished by you even before God's holy altar — the sanctity even of the temple of the Lord will not preserve him from your rage?"

"No, no!" exclaimed several voices, with savage determination.

"And so," continued Gabriel, with increasing energy, "you will sprinkle the very stones of the house of your God with the blood of your victim! You arrogate to yourselves the right of sullying the tabernacle of the Most High with the sight of a murder committed in cold blood. You assert that you are actuated by just motives, and are merely taking this man's life as a punishment for his crimes, and to serve as a warning for the prevention of others of a similar kind. Be it so. But, even then, what need is there for so many strong and powerful arms being upraised against one poor expiring creature? What occasion for all these furious cries — this violence? Is it thus the decrees of public justice are executed? Is it thus a generous and equitable people punish such as have transgressed their laws? No; when the awful penalty must be paid, and the guilty wretch receives his doom, it is awarded calmly and deliberately by the judge, who pities while he sentences, and scrupulously abides by the dictates of an impartial conscience in pronouncing the terrible decree which bids a fellow man expiate his offences with his life. Justice is not administered by wild and furious men, uttering savage yells and fierce cries, as though seeking to stupefy with terror some unhappy object of horrible and cowardly assassination. This, then, cannot be the fitting mode of accomplishing the fearful right with which you have invested yourselves, and which you are now waiting to execute, for you are still in the same mind, my brethren, as regards the unfortunate man you came hither to seek?"

"We are, we insist upon his life!" exclaimed the

quarryman; "we have a right to kill this person as he has killed others — he is a public poisoner!"

And with these words the infuriated ruffian advanced, with glaring eyes and inflamed countenance, at the head of a determined band, and, marching fiercely on, appeared as though intending to force Gabriel from the position he occupied before the gate leading to the choir.

But, instead of seeking to avoid the miscreant, the missionary went two or three steps forward to meet him, and, taking him by the arm, cried, with a loud, firm voice:

"Come!" and in a manner dragging the astonished quarrier after him, whom his thunderstruck companions did not at first venture to follow, Gabriel rapidly traversed the space that divided them from the choir, opened the gate, and, still holding the gigantic quarryman by the arm, exclaimed, pointing to the body of the Father d'Aigrigny, which lay still extended lifeless on the ground, "There is your victim! You have condemned him! Strike!"

"I?" cried the quarrier, drawing back. "What, alone?"

"Oh," answered Gabriel, with bitterness, "there is no danger, it will be an easy task! See, he is exhausted by terror and ill-treatment, and scarcely retains a spark of life. He will make no resistance, — be not afraid, then, of carrying out your purpose!"

The quarryman stood motionless; while the crowd, deeply touched by this novel incident, by degrees drew nearer and nearer to the open gate, without, however, venturing to cross its threshold.

"Strike, I say!" resumed Gabriel, pointing with solemn gesture to the assembled crowd; "there are the judges, and you are the executioner."

"No, no;" cried the quarryman, drawing back, and turning away his eyes, "I am no executioner — any more than others!"

The crowd remained still and motionless, and for several instants not a word or a sound broke the deep silence which reigned throughout the spacious cathedral.

In the imminent danger in which the life of D'Aigrigny was placed, Gabriel had acted with a profound knowledge of human nature. When a multitude, led away by blind rage, precipitates itself on a victim, and, amid the cries of an infuriated mob, each man deals his blow, this species of horrible murder appears less revolting, because undertaken in common. The savage excitement of the murderers is still further kept up by the screams, the groans, and the sight of their victim's blood, — nay, his desperate, though futile efforts to defend himself, serve but as fresh incentives to the ferocity of these madmen; but let a single individual be selected from among these merciless homicides, and let him be placed before a weak and unresisting creature, who might have been previously the object of all this furious violence, and then let him be bid to strike, in nine cases out of ten, that man's courage would fail him, and his hand refuse to deal the blow. So it was with the quarrier, the miserable being recoiled at the idea of committing a deliberate murder, alone, unaided, and in cold blood!

The preceding scene had passed very rapidly. Among such of the quarrier's companions as were nearest to the gate, many were incapable of comprehending the nature of the check his eagerness appeared to have sustained, although they themselves would have felt the very same as their hardened leader, had they, like him, been desired to perform the office of the executioner!

Several of the party then proceeded from murmuring at the delay to inveighing bitterly against the pusillanimity of their captain.

"Why, he seems afraid of knocking the poisoner on the head!" said one.

"The coward!"

"He is actually frightened!"

"See, he shrinks away instead of striking!"

As these exclamations reached the quarryman's ears, he ran to the gate, and holding it open, cried:

"If there is a man among you bolder than myself, let him come in and finish him who lies here. Let us see who chooses to turn public executioner!"

At this proposition the cries and murmurs sank into perfect silence, — a still calm again filled the vast cathedral, while the rough, rude countenances clustered around the grating of the choir, exchanged the wrathful, vindictive expression, which had erewhile lighted them up, for a gloomy, half confused, and frightened look; in fact, the misguided crowd became, for the first time, impressed with the consciousness of the vile and cowardly action they were about to commit.

No one stirred from among the dense crowd, — none had sufficient courage to undertake the deliberate act of slaughtering a fellow-creature with his single arm.

All at once Father d'Aigrigny uttered a faint cry of pain, raised, by a violent convulsive effort, his head and one arm from the pavement, and instantly fell back again, as a person who had just expired.

With a shriek of agony, Gabriel threw himself on his knees beside D'Aigrigny, exclaiming:

"God of mercy — he is dead!"

The mind of a multitude is frequently as easily impressed by incentives to good as evil. At the sudden and distracting outcry of Gabriel, those very men, who not many instants before had been loudly clamouring for the destruction of the person who now excited their sympathy, shuddered as the young priest, raising with one hand the heavy head of D'Aigrigny, tried with the other to find if still a pulse beat beneath the icy covering. Deep pity filled those very breasts so recently animated by the most deadly rage, as, with a subdued voice, they whispered from one to another:

"He is dead!"

"M. le Curé," said the quarryman, leaning over Gabriel, "is he indeed no more? Can nothing be done for him?"

A profound silence followed these words, while the crowd waited in breathless suspense for the reply of Gabriel.

"Praise be to God!" exclaimed Gabriel, at length, "he lives — his heart still beats!"

"His heart beats — he lives!" repeated the quarrier, turning towards the crowd to convey to them this joyful intelligence, while the words, "He lives!" were rapidly and exultingly passed from mouth to mouth.

"Yes, my friends," continued Gabriel, with a look of inexpressible happiness, "we shall yet be enabled to save him!"

"We shall save him!" repeated the quarrier, mechanically; and again the crowd softly whispered the good news to each other.

"Quick, quick!" said Gabriel, addressing the quarrier; "assist me, brother, to convey him to a neighbouring house, where he will receive every attention and the most skilful treatment."

The quarrier eagerly responded to the call, and, while the missionary raised D'Aigrigny by the arms, he supported the almost inanimate body, and so between them they carried it from the choir.

At the aspect of their redoubtable leader thus aiding the young priest to bear in safety the man whom he so lately pursued with such unrelenting rage, fresh compassion moved the multitude; who, melting under the influence of the words of Gabriel, as well as swayed by his noble example, gave full indulgence to the pity and remorse which now reproached them for their former violence, and each vied with the other in tendering their assistance to Gabriel.

"M. le Curé," suggested Ciboule, "the poor man would be much better carried on a chair!"

"Or shall I run to the Hôtel Dieu for a litter?" inquired a second voice.

"Here, let me take your place, M. le Curé," cried a third; "the body is too heavy for you!"

"Pray allow me!" cried a strong, able-bodied young man, approaching the missionary with respect. "I can carry him quite well without any one's help."

"Suppose I cut off after a coach, eh, M. le Curé?" inquired a regular-looking scamp, taking off his Greek cap.

"Ah, to be sure," replied the quarrier; "you've hit it, my ticket, — quick's the word — off with you!"

"But ask M. le Curé, first, if he approves of your fetching a coach," interposed Ciboule, arresting the progress of the impatient messenger; "you mustn't do anything but just what M. le Curé thinks proper."

"Quite right," answered a spectator; "we must not forget that we are in a church, and that M. le Curé is in his own house, and therefore the only person who has power to command here!"

"Then, hasten, my good lad!" said Gabriel, to the wild youth, whose desire to make himself useful had drawn down the rebuke of the two last speakers, "and make all the speed you can."

As the lad was making his way through the crowd, a voice was heard, saying:

"I have got a little wicker bottle containing brandy, would that be of any use?"

"Most assuredly!" answered Gabriel. "Let me have it, I beg; it is constantly employed to bathe the temples of sick persons, and also for them to smell."

"Pass the bottle," cried Ciboule; "and don't stop to take a gulp by the way!"

The bottle, carefully passed from hand to hand, reached Gabriel in perfect safety.

Whilst awaiting the arrival of a vehicle, D'Aigrigny had been temporarily placed in a chair, and, while many unsolicited hands were eagerly stretched out to support

the Jesuit, the missionary caused him to inspire the brandy contained in the bottle; and so powerful was the effect of the spirituous odour thus inhaled, that, after the lapse of a few seconds, D'Aigrigny made some slight movements, whilst a deep, convulsive sigh heaved his oppressed bosom.

"He is saved — he will live!" exclaimed Gabriel, in an exulting voice. "Brothers, share in my joy, his life is safe!"

"So much the better, so much the better!" responded a burst of voices.

"So much the better, indeed, brethren," continued Gabriel; "for, instead of being overwhelmed by remorse for a crime, you will only have to dwell on the delightful reflection of a charitable and just action. Let us bless God that he has changed your blind fury into a sentiment of compassion and sympathy. Let us beseech him, that neither yourselves, nor those dearest to you, may ever incur the fearful dangers this unfortunate individual has just escaped. Oh, my brethren," added Gabriel, pointing to a large figure of the crucifixion, with an emotion rendered still more touching and effective by the beauty of his heavenly countenance; "my dear brethren, let us never forget that he who died on that cross to save all who were in misery or sorely troubled, who was once poor and needy as we may be, has left us these tender, these encouraging words, 'Love ye one another, even as God himself has loved you!' Let us never forget them, never cease to remember who it was spoke them; but let us love, aid, and cherish others, poor and lowly though we be. We shall thereby become happier, better, and more just. Let us love each other, my brethren, with love as tender and unselfish as was felt by him who died upon the cross; and let us humbly prostrate ourselves before the Christ, the Saviour of every weak, suffering, and oppressed being in this world of tears and sorrow!"

So saying, Gabriel knelt down, followed by the respectful multitude, so deeply had his mild, yet energetic language changed their hearts.

At this moment, a singular incident added to the sublimity of the scene.

As we have already said, shortly before the incursion of the quarrier and his party into the church, several individuals, who chanced to be there, had made a hasty retreat, two among the number seeking refuge in the organ-loft, from whence, though concealed from observation, they had witnessed all the preceding scene. One of the persons was a young man employed in taking care of the organ, and a sufficiently good musician to be able to perform on it. Profoundly affected by the unexpected termination of a scene, which at first threatened such tragical results, and, yielding to his own musical inspiration, this young man, at the moment when he perceived Gabriel place himself on his knees, surrounded by all the people, could not refrain from seating himself at the instrument.

At first a sort of harmonious and almost inaudible sigh appeared to float upon the bosom of the vast cathedral, like a breath from heaven; then, as soft and sweet as angels' whispers, the aerial sounds spread through the lofty domes like the rich odours of the ascending incense; by degrees these mild and dulcet notes changed their subdued sweetness into an inexpressibly touching melody, at once melancholy, tender, and religious, rising in perfect harmony to heaven as one burst of grateful voices, chanting forth their exceeding love and gratitude to the great Giver of all, with deep rejoicings in the mercy of a Saviour, who died that all might live.

These strains were at first so low, so subdued, and so touching, that the kneeling multitude felt no sudden surprise, but were in a manner carried away almost unconsciously beneath the irresistible influence of heav-

enly harmony; and many an eye until then dry and stern became humid with gentle tears; many a heart hardened against good beat as it had done in innocent days, when, kneeling beside their mother's knee, they had prayed for forgiveness, as they also hoped to be forgiven; and many a strong nature melted before the words so tenderly pronounced by Gabriel, "Love ye one another."

It was at this precise moment that D'Aigrigny regained his consciousness and opened his eyes; at first he believed himself under the influence of a dream.

He had lost his senses at the sight of an infuriated populace, who, with imprecations and threats on their lips, had pursued him with cries of death, even to the holy sanctuary of the Lord's house; but when the Jesuit reopened his eyes he beheld, by the pale light of the silver lamps burning in the sacred edifice, the before angry, vengeful, and implacable multitude kneeling in silent humility, and as though awestruck by the full religious sounds of the swelling organ, bending in earnest supplication before the throne of God, and prostrating themselves in devout adoration before the sanctity of the holy temple of God.

A few minutes after this, Gabriel, borne almost in triumph on the shoulders of the multitude, ascended the vehicle into which D'Aigrigny, who had now perfectly recovered his senses, had been previously placed.

This carriage, by order of the Jesuit, stopped before the door of a house in the Rue Vangirard, whither he summoned sufficient strength and courage to enter alone. Gabriel not being invited to accompany him to this dwelling, we shall at once conduct the reader thither.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE PROMENADE.

At the extremity of the Rue de Vangirard there was a very high wall, in the entire length of which there was only one small wicket gate. When that door was opened, a courtyard was crossed surrounded by iron-barred windows covered with Venetian blinds, which precluded all possibility of seeing anything through the bars; then a large and beautiful garden was entered, planted with care and the utmost symmetry, at the farther end of which was a building two stories high, of a most comfortable appearance, constructed without any attempt at grandeur, but with that well-devised simplicity which is the evident token of well-regulated opulence.

A few days have passed since Père d'Aigrigny had been so boldly and nobly snatched by Gabriel from the infuriated populace. Three ecclesiastics, wearing black gowns, white collars, and square caps, were walking in the garden with slow and measured pace. The youngest of the three priests seemed about thirty years of age; his countenance was pale, wrinkled, and marked with ascetic asperity. His two companions, aged from fifty to sixty, had, on the contrary, physiognomies at the same time devout and cunning; their cheeks, red and plump, shone in the sunshine, whilst their three chins like dewlaps gently reposed in the fine cambric of their collars. According to the rules of the Order (they belonged to the Society of Jesus), which forbids them

from walking only two together, these three congregationists did not leave each other for a single moment.

"I very much fear," said one of the two, continuing a conversation begun, and speaking of one absent person, "I very much fear that the continued excitement to which the reverend father has been a prey since he was smitten by the cholera has exhausted his strength, and caused the dangerous relapse, which causes so much alarm for his life."

"Never, as they tell me," said the other reverend father, "was agony seen like his."

"Yes," said the youngest priest with bitterness, "it is painful to think that his reverence the Père Rodin has been a subject of scandal, inasmuch as he obstinately refused the day before yesterday to make a public confession, when his condition appeared so desperate that, between two of the paroxysms that attacked him, it was deemed proper to offer him the last sacrament."

"His reverence declared that he was not so ill as he was supposed to be," added one of the fathers, "and that he would go through his final duties when he felt the necessity for so doing."

"The fact is, that for ten days, ever since he was brought here in a dying state, his life has only been, as we may say, one protracted, agonising struggle, and still he keeps alive."

"I watched over him for the first three days of his illness, with M. Rousselet, Doctor Baleinier's pupil," said the young priest, "and he had hardly one conscious interval; and, when the Lord accorded him a few moments of lucidity, he employed them in detestable exclamations against fate which nailed him to the bed."

"It is asserted," said another reverend father, "that the Père Rodin replied to Monseigneur the Cardinal Malipieri, who had come to urge him to make an exemplary end, — one worthy a son of Loyola, our holy founder (at these words, the three Jesuits bowed simul-

taneously, as if they were each moved by one common spring), — it is asserted, I say, that Père Rodin replied to his eminence, 'I have no need to confess publicly; I wish to live, and shall live.'"

"I was not present at that time; but if the Père Rodin has dared to utter such words," said the young priest, with an air of indignation, "it is — "

Then reflection coming, no doubt, very apropos to his aid, he threw a look askance at his two mute companions, and added:

"It is a great misfortune for his soul; but I am certain they have calumniated his reverence."

"It was but as a calumnious report that I alluded to these words," said the other priest, exchanging a look with his companion.

A long silence followed.

Whilst they had been conversing, the three congregationists had traversed a long walk, which ended at a clump of trees.

In the centre of the point whence other walks radiated, there was a large round stone table. A man, also clothed in ecclesiastical attire, was kneeling on this table, having on his back and breast two tablets suspended.

On one was written in large characters:

"REBELLIOUS."

On the other:

"CARNAL."

The reverend father, who, according to rules, was undergoing, at the hour of the promenade, this absurd, humiliating, and schoolboy punishment, was a man of forty, with a frame of Hercules, bull-necked, with black curly hair, and swarthy visage. Although, according to custom, he continually and humbly kept his eyes lowered, it was easy to see, by the coarse and constant contraction of his shaggy eyebrows, that his internal resentment by

no means tallied with his external resignation, especially when he saw the reverend fathers approach, who, in numbers of two and three, or alone, walked up and down in the paths which surrounded the circular spot where he was exposed. When they passed this vigorous penitent, the three reverend fathers, of whom we have spoken, obeying an impulse of admirable regularity and sympathy, simultaneously raised their eyes to heaven, as if to ask pardon for the abominations and sorrow of which one of their Order was the cause; then, with a second look, no less mechanical than the first, they all together darted a look of thunder and lightning on the poor placarded devil, — stout fellow as he was, and seeming to unite in his proper person all possible rights and titles to be rebellious and carnal. After which, heaving, like one man, three deep sighs of holy indignation, exactly similar, the reverend fathers resumed their promenade with the precision of automata.

Amongst the other reverend fathers, who were thus promenading in the garden, there were here and there several laymen; and for this reason:

The reverend fathers had a neighbouring house, separated only from their own by a hedge, and to this house a good number of devotees came at certain periods to place themselves as boarders, in order to effect what in their jargon is called *retraites.*

This was charming. They found here combined the delights of succulent cookery and a lovely little chapel, a new and happy combination of the confessional and furnished apartment, the *table-d'hôte* and sermon.

It was a delicate imagination that thus incorporated the holy hostelry where corporeal and spiritual aliments were as appetisingly as delicately chosen and served up, where soul and body were alike refreshed at so much a head, and where they might eat meat on a Friday in all security of conscience, provided there was duly paid for a dispensation from Rome, piously marked down in

the bill immediately following the coffee and glass of brandy. Thus, let us say it to the honour and glory of the profound financial skill of the reverend fathers and their insinuating dexterity, they had an immensity of custom. And how could it be otherwise? The game was cooked to a turn, having been hung till the precise moment, the way to Paradise was made so exquisitely smooth; the sea-fish was so fresh, the rugged path of salvation so swept of thorns, and so deliciously sprinkled with sand, rose-colour and sifted, the newly tapped wine was so abundant, the penitences so slight, to say nothing of the glorious sausages from Italy, and the indulgences of the holy father, which came direct from Rome, and first hand and first choice. What *tables-d'hôte* on earth could stand against such competition? There were, in this calm, oily, and opulent retreat, so many arrangements for the road to heaven! For many persons, rich and pious, timid and meek, who, whilst they are horribly afraid of the devil's horns, cannot all at once renounce a multitude of very small and dearly beloved sins, the complaisant guidance and elastic morality of the reverend fathers were inappreciable.

In fact, what deep and lasting gratitude ought not a corrupt, selfish, and cowardly old man to feel towards a priesthood who thus assured him against the prongs of Beelzebub's fork, and guaranteed to him eternal beatitude, and all without asking of him the sacrifice of one of his vitiated appetites, his depraved tastes, or those feelings of grossest egotism which had become the habit and the delight of his existence! Thus, how could he recompense, adequately, those confessors so delightfully indulgent, those spiritual guides, whose complaisance was unbounded? Alas! that was all to be paid for holily by the future gift of good and productive estates, of bright crowns all full weight, all to the loss and detriment of heirs at law and by blood, often poor, honest, industrious, and thus piously defrauded by the reverend fathers.

One of the old monks of whom we have spoken, making allusion to the presence of the laymen in the garden of the house, and no doubt desirous of breaking a silence that had become embarrassing, said to the young monk with the gloomy and fanatic countenance:

"The last boarder but one they brought in wounded to our house of retreat continues, no doubt, as wild as ever, for I do not see him with our other boarders."

"Perhaps," said the other monk, "he prefers to walk alone in the garden of the new building."

"I do not think, since this man has been in our house of retreat, he has ever entered the little parterre contiguous to the detached pavilion which he occupies at the lower end of our establishment. Père d'Aigrigny, who alone communicates with him, was complaining lately of the gloomy apathy of this boarder, whom we have not yet seen once in chapel," added the young father, with severity.

"Perhaps he is not in a state to go there," said another of the reverend fathers.

"Yes, he is," replied the other; "for I heard Doctor Baleinier say that exercise would be very salutary for this boarder, who is now convalescent, but obstinately refuses to quit his chamber."

"He could easily be carried to the chapel," remarked the young father, in a harsh tone; and then, becoming silent, he continued to walk beside his two companions, who conversed as they went on.

"Do you know this boarder's name?"

"During the fortnight I know he has been here, I have never heard him called otherwise than Monsieur du Pavillon."

"One of our servants, who is waiting on him, and calls him thus, told me he was a man of extreme mildness, who appeared overwhelmed with some deep grief; he rarely speaks, and often passes whole hours with his face buried in his two hands. He appears quite contented

with the house, but, strange to say, prefers a twilight darkness to daylight; and, by another singularity, the blaze of a fire causes him such intense uneasiness that, notwithstanding the cold of the last days in March, he would not allow a fire to be lighted in his apartment."

"Perhaps he is a lunatic?"

"No, on the contrary, the servant told me, that Monsieur du Pavillon was in perfect possession of his senses, but that the flame of the fire probably reminded him of some painful event."

"Père d'Aigrigny must know better than any one else all about Monsieur du Pavillon, if such be his name, for he spends hours every day in long conference with him."

"Père d'Aigrigny has, however, for the last three days broken off these conferences, for he has not left his own chamber since he was brought here the other evening in a hackney-coach, dangerously ill, as they tell me."

"True; but to return to what our dear brother just now said," replied the other, looking towards the young father, who was walking with downcast eyes, as if counting the grains of sand in the walk, "it is singular that the convalescent, the unknown, has not yet appeared in chapel? Our other boarders come here especially to make their retreats with a redoubling of religious fervour; and how is it, then, that this Monsieur du Pavillon does not participate in their zeal?"

"Why else should he have chosen our house in preference to any other?"

"Perhaps it is a conversion; or, perhaps, he has come to be instructed in our holy religion."

And the three priests continued their promenade.

To listen to this empty, puerile, gossiping conversation on third persons (all of whom are important to this history), these three reverend fathers might well be taken for men of middling or mean capacities; but that would have been a serious mistake. Each of them, accord-

ing to the character he was called upon to play in the devout troop, possessed high and decided merit, attended with that bold and insinuating, sly and firm, flexible and dissimulating spirit which is peculiar to the majority of the members of this society. Thanks to the obligation of mutual espionage imposed on each and all; thanks to the detestable distrust which resulted therefrom, and in the midst of which these priests lived, they never exchanged with each other but those commonplaces which were free from all suspicion, reserving all the resources, all the powers of their mind, in order to execute passively the will of their chief, that, uniting in the accomplishment of the order, they might receive the most absolute, most blind obedience, as to extent, and the most perfect, most diabolical dexterity as to the form.

Thus it would be difficult to enumerate the rich inheritances, the princely gifts which the two reverend fathers, with faces so jolly and rubicund, had caused to flow into the purse (always open, always insatiable, always covetous) of the congregation, employing to effect their crafty ends, played off on weak minds, the sick or the dying, sometimes sanctified persuasion, cunning trickery, promises of nice small berths in paradise, etc.; sometimes slander, threats, and alarm.

The youngest of the reverends, so fitly gifted with a pale and sallow complexion, a gloomy and fanatic look, and a harsh, intolerant voice, was a sort of ascetic prospectus, a kind of living sample which the company sent on ahead, in certain cases, when it was necessary to persuade the simple that nothing could be more severe, more austere than the sons of Loyola, and that, by dint of abstinences and mortifications, they became bony and transparent like anchorites, — a belief which the fathers with "fair round bellies" and well-plumped cheeks would have found some difficulties in propagating; in a word, as in every company of old actors, they endeavoured as much as possible that each character should be

performed by him whose corporeal constitution was most suited to it.

Whilst discoursing as we have said, the reverend fathers had reached a building contiguous to the prinpal habitation, and arranged like a large warehouse. The communication at this spot was effected by a private entrance, which a tolerably high wall concealed. Through an open and barred window there was heard the incessant metallic clink of money, and sometimes there was a rushing sound, as if they had emptied it from a bag on to the table; sometimes it gave out that harsh noise which piles of money give out when they are put in heaps.

In this building was the commercial treasury, where payment was made for the loan of books, engravings, rosaries, etc., made by the congregation, and profusely spread over France by the assistance of the church, — books, almost always stupid, singular, and licentious,[1] or else false, detestable productions, in which everything that is great, noble, illustrious, in the glorious history of our immortal republic, is travestied, or told in language that would disgrace a fish-market. As to the engravings representing modern miracles, they are executed in a style of burlesque effrontery, which transcends most of the placards full of buffoonery, as they are exhibited by mountebanks at a fair.

After having complacently listened to the metallic ring of the crown-pieces, one of the reverends said, with a smile:

"To-day is only the small pay-day. The manager said, lately, that the profits of the first quarter were eighty-three thousand francs." (3,500*l.*)

"At least," said the young father, with emphasis, "it is so many resources and means of doing evil withdrawn from the hands of the impious."

[1] In proof, we need only refer to one small work sold in the month of Marie, in which are the most revolting details of the accouchement of the Virgin; and this volume is intended for young ladies.

"It is in vain for the impious to rebel, the pious are with us," added the other reverend father; "we have only to see, in spite of the anxious cares excited by the cholera, how rapidly the tickets for our pious lottery have gone off; and every day they bring us new lots. Yesterday the contributions were excellent. First, a small copy of the Venus Callipyges, in white marble (another gift might have been more modest, but the end justifies the means). Second, a piece of the cord which was used to bind that infamous wretch Robespierre on the scaffold, and which is still marked with his accursed blood. Third, a canine tooth of Saint Fructueux, inlaid in a small gold reliquary. Fourth, a box of rouge of the time of the regency, in magnificent Coromandel ware, set around with fine pearls."

"This morning," continued the other, "they brought a splendid lot. Only imagine, my dear brothers, a magnificent poniard, with silver-gilt hilt. The blade, very broad, is hollow; and, by means of a really wonderful mechanism, as soon as the blade is plunged into anybody, the very force of the blow causes a quantity of small transverse blades to dart forth, exceedingly sharp, so that, in penetrating the flesh, they render it completely impossible to withdraw the mother-blade, if we may use such an expression. I do not think it possible to devise a more murderous weapon, of which the scabbard is of velvet, elaborately adorned with plates of sculptured silver-gilt."

"Oh, oh, that is a lot which will create a deal of competition."

"Unquestionably," replied the reverend father; "and so it has been put with the Venus and the box of rouge amongst the great lots, for the drawing of the Virgin."

"What do you mean?" cried the other, with astonishment. "What is the drawing of the Virgin?"

"What, don't you know?"

"Certainly not."

"It is a charming invention of Mother Sainte Perpétue. Imagine, my dear brother, that the principal lots will be drawn by a small figure of the Virgin, by means of a spring placed under her gown, and wound up with a watch-key, which then gives the figure a circular motion for some instants, so that the number at which the Holy Mother of the Lord Jesus pauses is the winning one." [1]

"Oh, it is really charming!" said the other father. "The idea is as apt as delightful. I had not heard of it. But do you know how much the *ostensoir* will cost, the expenses of which, it is intended, this lottery shall defray?"

"The *père procureur* told me that the *ostensoir*, with the gems included, could not cost less than thirty-five thousand francs (1,400*l.*), exclusive of the old one, which will be only taken for old gold, and is estimated at about nine thousand francs." (360*l.*)

"The lottery will bring us in forty thousand francs (1,600*l.*); so we shall be quite right in that respect," added the other reverend father; "and, at least, our chapel will not be eclipsed by the insolent extravagance of that of the Lazaristes."

"They, on the contrary, will now envy us, for their fine *ostensoir* of massive gold, of which they were so proud, is not worth one-half what our lottery will produce us; since ours will be not only the larger, but covered with precious stones."

This interesting conversation was unfortunately interrupted. It was so touching to see priests of a religion all poverty and humility, of submission and charity, having recourse to games of chance prohibited by law, and extending their hand to the public, to adorn their altars with revolting luxury, whilst thousands of their

[1] This ingenious parody of the games of roulette and biribi applied to an image of the Virgin took place at the drawing of a religious lottery six weeks since, in a female convent. For believers, this must be monstrous sacrilege; and for those who are indifferent it is deplorable ridicule; for, of all traditions, that of Marie is one of the most touching and respected.

brethren were dying of hunger and misery at the doors of their glittering chapels! A miserable rivalry of relics having no source but a vulgar and low feeling of envy, there was no contention as to who first should succour the poor, but who should display most riches on the table of the altar.[1]

One of the doors of the garden gate opened, and one of the three reverend fathers said, at the sight of a new person who entered:

[1] These lines were written when there came to our knowledge, if not a fact, at least a hope, in which we rejoice with all good persons. It is of a lottery devoted to the rebuilding of the organ of St. Eustache, — a lottery which at this moment occupies all Paris, and for the tickets of which a disgraceful premium is asked. A person, well informed, has assured us that the Archbishop of Paris, moved by a decidedly Christian scruple, in which we beg most sincerely to join, has begged the curé of St. Eustache to give a nobly useful, generous, and charitable destination to the enormous sum arising from this lottery, — a sum amounting to two hundred and fifty thousand francs (10,000*l.*), and originally intended for the rebuilding of the organ of the parish of St. Eustache.

If we are well informed, the archbishop proposes: That the two hundred and fifty thousand francs invested in the funds will produce an annual revenue of about ten thousand francs. With this income every year, there can be effectual succour offered to at least twenty or thirty distressed families, giving each from three hundred francs to five hundred francs; and, according to the intentions of the archbishop, the curé of St. Eustache will have an understanding with the mayor and members of the Bureau de Charité of his division as to the just and legitimate distribution of this unlooked-for succour.

After the drawing of the lottery, a kind of bill of indemnity relative to the change in the destination of the funds shall be demanded of the Assembly by the curé of St. Eustache, with the warm eloquence which has never failed him, and which certainly will never have been inspired by a more Christian motive.

No doubt but the majority of givers and subscribers will joyfully consent to this proposal — we should say gratefully — when M. le Curé, in tones full of emotion and conviction, shall have pointed out to them the ineffable happiness they must experience, when they reflect that, instead of having contributed to the useless erection of so costly and, at least, misplaced a superfluity, in a church of one of the poorest quarters of Paris, where so much misery is rife, they will henceforth have assured in perpetuity an annual succour to so many interesting unfortunates; for, in ten years only, three or four hundred families may be thus snatched from most desperate misery.

We applaud most warmly this wise and charitable determination on the part of the Archbishop of Paris, with whom the curé of St. Eustache is so worthy to be associated; and we think with them, that the blessings of the families succoured by this timely and sensible almsgiving will be for God a concert more agreeable than the sounds of a colossal piece of music costing two hundred and fifty thousand francs.

It is useless to add that an indemnity will probably be awarded to the workmen who were to have made this organ, and who would not necessarily be thrown out of work in case the lottery in question had not been thought of.

This note not being submitted to the interdict which hangs over our work as to republishing, we shall be happy to see our friends repeat it in the journals they write, in order to give every possible publicity to a resolution so honourable to those from whom it emanated. — EUGENE SUE.

"Oh, here is his Eminence the Cardinal Malipieri come to visit Père Rodin."

"May this visit of his eminence," said the young father, with a satirical air, "be more profitable to Père Rodin than the last!"

At this moment Cardinal Malipieri passed through the end of the garden on his way to the apartment occupied by Rodin.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE PATIENT.

CARDINAL MALIPIERI (whom the reader will recognise as one of the personages present at the sort of conclave held by the Princesse de Saint-Dizier) repaired forthwith to the chamber of Rodin. His eminence was dressed as a layman; he wore a large dressing-gown, of puce-coloured satin, from which exhaled a powerful smell of camphor, for the prelate had not neglected providing himself with any of the restoratives which were then believed anti-choleric.

Arrived at one of the landings belonging to the second floor, he stopped before a door painted gray; no one replied to the cardinal's knock. His eminence, therefore, waited for no further ceremony, but at once went in, as a sort of privileged person. He traversed a species of anteroom, and arrived in a small chamber, on one side of which stood a truckle-bed, and on the other a dark wooden table, covered with empty phials.

The physiognomy of the prelate was stamped with an expression of uneasiness and gloom; his complexion evinced a more than ordinary bilious hue, while the dark halos that usually encircled his black, squinting eyes seemed broader and blacker than ever.

Suddenly stopping, the cardinal looked around him almost fearfully, then several times strongly inspired the odour of an anti-cholera phial he carried in his hand; then, finding himself alone, he approached a looking-glass placed over the chimney, and minutely

inspected the colour of his tongue, and seeming, after a most rigid examination, thoroughly satisfied with the result, he next drew forth a small gold box containing preservation lozenges; two or three of these he placed in his mouth, closing his eyes with great earnestness while they dissolved upon his palate.

These sanitary precautions taken, and the bottle of aromatic essence again pressed to his nostrils, the cardinal was preparing to enter the adjoining room, but hearing, through the slight partition which divided him from it, a somewhat unusual noise, he paused to listen, for so thin was the division between the room he stood in and that occupied by the patient, that not a sound escaped him.

"I tell you I insist upon getting up," said a feeble, but abrupt and imperious voice.

"You must not think of it, reverend father," replied a voice, in a stronger key; "it is perfectly impossible!"

"We shall see whether it be possible or no," returned the first speaker.

"But, reverend father, do you wish to kill yourself? You are absolutely unable to rise! You would certainly bring on a dangerous relapse were you to attempt such a thing. I cannot, and I will not consent to it." These words were followed by a fresh noise, as if of some feeble struggle, mingled with groans more of anger than sorrow, and then the last voice resumed, "No, no, father; and, for better providing against accidents, I will remove your clothes out of your reach. It is now the hour you should take your draught. I will go and prepare it."

And, a door almost immediately opening, the prelate saw a young man, of about twenty-five years of age, enter, bearing on his arm an old olive-coloured great-coat, with an equally shabby threadbare pair of black pantaloons; these two articles he threw upon the nearest chair.

This individual was M. Ange Modeste Rousselet, Doctor Baleinier's head pupil. The countenance of the young practitioner expressed humility, mildness, and reserve, while his hair, which was cut almost close to his forehead, floated long and loosely down his neck and shoulders. He made a slight movement of surprise at the sight of the cardinal, whom he profoundly saluted, by bowing twice, without, however, once venturing to lift his eyes towards the face of his visitor.

"In the first place," said the prelate, with his strong Italian accent, and still keeping the phial of anti-contagious salts tightly glued to his nostrils, "tell me, have the cholera symptoms returned?"

"They have not, my lord; but the malignant fever, which succeeded the cholera, is running its usual course."

"That is well! But it seems the reverend father will not listen to reason. What was that noise I heard just now?"

"My lord, his reverence positively insisted upon rising and dressing himself, when, from his extreme weakness, he was incapable of standing on his feet. He is devoured by impatience, and we are very apprehensive lest this continual agitation of mind should bring upon him a relapse, which must inevitably prove fatal."

"Has Doctor Baleinier been here this morning?"

"He has just left, my lord!"

"And what is his opinion of the patient?"

"He considers him to be in a most alarming state, my lord. He passed so bad a night last night, that M. Baleinier was very uneasy indeed this morning. The reverend father is now in one of those critical stages of his disease, in which a great and important crisis must speedily decide his life or death. M. Baleinier has now gone to procure what is requisite for the performance of a most painful, though reactive operation, and he will shortly return to perform this operation himself."

"Has Father d'Aigrigny been apprised of this?"

"The reverend father is himself suffering under illness, as your eminence is doubtless aware; it is now three days since he has been able to leave his bed."

"I inquired after him as I came up-stairs," replied the prelate, "and I purpose paying him a visit shortly. But, to return to Father Rodin, has his confessor been sent for, since he lies in an almost hopeless state, and is on the point of undergoing so serious an operation?"

"M. Baleinier did venture to say two or three words on the subject, as well as respecting the last sacraments for the dying; but Father Rodin angrily declared that he was not allowed a moment's rest, but was being worried and harassed into his grave, that the safety of his soul was of as great importance to him as it could possibly be to any one else, and that—"

"*Per Bacco!* he is not the person most concerned in the matter!" exclaimed the cardinal, interrupting, with this pagan ejaculation, the further progress of M. Ange Modeste Rousselet, and elevating his voice even beyond its naturally sharp, shrill pitch; "he is not the person to be considered, but the interests of the Company of Jesus. It is of paramount importance that the reverend father should receive the holy sacraments with the most startling and imposing effect, and that he should make not merely a Christian departure from this world, but that his end should be one talked of with wonder and admiration. It will be requisite to invite, not only the whole of the persons belonging to this house, but also strangers from all parts to witness the spectacle, that his edifying death may produce the most beneficial results."

"Precisely what the Reverend Fathers Grison and Brunet have already endeavoured to impress on his reverence, my lord; but your eminence is aware with how much displeasure Father Rodin received these suggestions, and, in the fear of bringing on a dangerous, perhaps fatal crisis, Doctor Baleinier has not

ventured to persist in pressing them on the reverend father."

"Then it shall be my task to do so; for, in these times of revolutionary impiety, the solemn end of a Christian such as Father Rodin cannot fail of producing a most salutary effect on the public mind. It would be more desirable that the reverend father should be embalmed after death; he might then be offered for several days for public inspection in an illuminated chapel, according to the custom of the Romish faith. My secretary will furnish the design for the funeral car, which shall be of the most splendid and imposing description. Indeed, the high position of the reverend father in our community entitles him to the most sumptuous style of funeral obsequies. He should have at least six hundred waxen tapers or candles, with about a dozen silver lamps burning with spirits of wine, and so placed over him as to throw a soft, yet brilliant light on the corpse. That will produce a charming effect; and to heighten the impression, persons, suitably attired in deep mourning, shall be employed to distribute among the admiring spectators small slips of paper, containing passages relative to the pious and self-denying life of the reverend deceased. After that, there should be —"

A sudden ringing, made like that produced by throwing a metallic substance violently on the ground, proceeded from the adjoining chamber, in which lay the sick man, and obliged the prelate to cease his enumeration of the many honours with which he intended to adorn the burial of the Reverend Father Rodin.

"I trust, my lord," whispered M. Ange Modeste Rousselet, "that his reverence has not heard what you said respecting his being embalmed; but his bed touches this partition, and every word that is spoken here can be distinctly heard in the adjoining chamber."

"If he has heard me," replied the cardinal, instantly

dropping his voice, and retreating to the farther extremity of the apartment, "it will enable me to come to the point at once with him. However, under any and every circumstance, I insist that the embalming and public exposition will be highly necessary to strike a powerful blow on the minds of the public, who are already terrified at the ravages of the cholera, and are precisely in that excited state in which the mind most easily receives strong and vivid impressions."

"Your eminence must permit me to remark that such exhibitions are not allowed here, the laws —"

"Ah," interrupted the cardinal, wrathfully, "there we have it again — the laws — the laws! Always the laws whenever a good or praiseworthy manifestation of religion is proposed! But, pray, has not Rome, too, its laws? And is not every priest the subject of Rome? Is it not then time to —" Then, pausing, as though unwilling to explain himself more explicitly to the young doctor, the prelate merely replied: "All this shall be duly considered and attended to, but, pray tell me, has the reverend father had any fresh attack of delirium since I was last here?"

"Yes, my lord; during the past night he was delirious for nearly two hours."

"And did you, as I requested, keep an exact account of each word that escaped the patient's lips during the paroxysms?"

"I did, my lord. Your eminence will find herein written every sentence uttered by Father Rodin during his unconscious state."

So saying, M. Ange Modeste Rousselet took from his side pocket a folded paper, which he handed to the cardinal with a low bow.

We shall merely observe that the latter part of the conversation, having been carried on in an undertone, and at the other end of the room, Rodin had not been able to catch one word, while the whole of the previous

part relative to the proposed embalming had been distinctly heard by him.

The cardinal, having received the note from M. Rousselet, opened it with the most eager curiosity. After a hasty perusal of its contents, he crushed the paper in his hand, murmuring, in a tone of evident chagrin:

"Still a mere assemblage of incoherent words; not a sentence from which any tangible conclusion can be drawn. One would imagine that this man were gifted with the power of controlling his speech, even during the ravings of delirium, and only permits himself to talk wildly when his brain wanders on trifling matters!" Then, addressing M. Rousselet, he said, "You are positively sure that you have omitted none of the expressions used by the reverend father during last night's attack?"

"With the exception of phrases which, though continually repeated by his reverence, I have only once written, your eminence may rest persuaded I have not left out a single word, however insignificant or unmeaning it might have appeared to me."

"You will now have the goodness to conduct me to the reverend father," said the prelate, after a momentary silence.

"But, my lord," remonstrated the young man, with deep submission and considerable hesitation, "the fit has but left his reverence about an hour, and he is extremely weak and exhausted!"

"An additional reason for my choosing the present moment for my visit," said the prelate, somewhat incautiously. Then, as if desirous of correcting himself, he added, "I mean he will be better able to appreciate the consolations I come to offer him. Go instantly, and apprise him of my visit, and should he have fallen asleep let him be awakened."

"It is for your eminence to command, and for me to

obey," said M. Rousselet, bowing till his head nearly touched the cardinal's feet. And M. Ange Modeste Rousselet disappeared into the adjoining chamber.

Left alone, the cardinal said, with a thoughtful air, "I do not forget, when first Rodin was seized with this fearful attack of cholera, his first idea was of being poisoned by order of the papal throne. He must, then, be carrying on formidable machinations against Rome to have conceived so abominable an apprehension. Are our suspicions respecting him, then, well founded? Can he be carrying on dangerous though concealed plots against an influential party of our Sacred College? But wherefore should he do so? Ah, that is the thing we cannot manage to discover, so well are all his secrets kept by those he employs — his accomplices are too faithful! I was in hopes that, during his delirium, he would have let fall some word or expression which would have assisted me in finding out what it is so important to know; for, generally, and more especially with men of minds so busy, restless, and active as his, the ravings of madness are but the expression of one predominating idea; yet this is the fifth written transcript I have received of all he has uttered during so many attacks of delirium, and not a word, not a sentence one would care to know, nothing but unmeaning sentences, or unconnected expressions —"

The reflections of the prelate were interrupted by the return of M. Rousselet.

"I am extremely concerned to be obliged to tell your eminence that the reverend father positively refuses to see any one. He asserts, as a reason, his absolute need of perfect rest. Although greatly exhausted, he seems much incensed; and I should not be surprised if he overheard what your eminence proposed respecting his being embalmed —"

Without allowing M. Rousselet to proceed, the cardinal exclaimed:

"If I understand aright, Father Rodin was delirious during the past night?"

"He was, your eminence; the fit came on about three o'clock this morning, and continued till about half-past five."

"From three to half-past five," repeated the prelate, as though seeking to impress this fact on his memory; "and, upon the whole, the attack passed away without presenting any fact that struck you as extraordinary in any way?"

"None, whatever, my lord, as your eminence may convince yourself of by perusing the paper, which, I beg to repeat, contains even the most incoherent word." Then, perceiving that the prelate was making his way towards Rodin's chamber, M. Rousselet again deferentially observed, "But, indeed, my lord, it will be useless going into that room, the reverend father peremptorily refuses to see any one. He has, indeed, need to gather strength to support the operation which will be shortly performed upon him, and there would be, possibly, considerable danger in —"

But, without deigning the slightest attention to this remark, the cardinal at once entered Rodin's apartment.

This chamber, which was large, and lighted by two good-sized windows, was plainly, but comfortably furnished. Two large logs were burning upon the hearth. Among the hot cinders were placed a coffee-pot, an earthen jug, and a saucepan of the same material, from whence steamed forth a powerful scent of mustard, while on the chimney were scattered morsels of linen, and various bandages.

Throughout this chamber prevailed that peculiar smell arising from the combinations of medicines, and peculiar to sick-rooms in general, mingled with an odour so acrid, nauseous, and offensive that the cardinal suddenly paused on the threshold, either unable or unwilling to advance.

As the reverend fathers had observed during their morning's walk, Rodin lived because he had said:

"I must, and I will live!"

For, in the same manner as weak imaginations and cowardly minds frequently sink at the bare apprehensions of evil (a thousand facts bear out the assertion), so do vigour of character and moral energy frequently enable the possessor to struggle successfully against misfortunes, and even to triumph over almost desperate cases.

So it was with the Jesuit. The indomitable firmness of his disposition, and, it might almost be added, the fierce determination of his will (for the will has sometimes a sort of mysterious omnipotence, which is as wonderful as fearful), aided by the skilful treatment of Doctor Baleinier, had enabled him to overcome the dreadful complaint by which he had been originally attacked; but to the violent shock the whole system had undergone, from the scourge which had so unexpectedly seized it, succeeded a fever of the most dangerous description, which for several days placed the life of Rodin in the greatest jeopardy.

This increase of danger had created the most lively apprehensions in the mind of D'Aigrigny, who, spite of his jealous rivalry with Rodin, was well aware that, in the present position of affairs, it was the hand of Rodin that held the various threads of their vast scheme, and which alone could bring it to a successful issue.

The half closed curtains admitted but an imperfect light on the bed, where Rodin writhed in hopeless impatience. The countenance of the Jesuit had lost that greenish cast peculiar to cholera patients, but it had assumed a corpselike lividness; and so fearfully was he attenuated, that his harsh, rough skin clung, with appalling tenacity, to his sharp, angular bones. The veins and muscles of his long, skinny, withered throat, resembling, in its naked hideousness, that of a vulture, looked

like a bundle of cords; while his head, covered with a greasy, faded silk night-cap, from which escaped a few straggling locks of dull gray hair, reposed on a soiled and tumbled pillow, Rodin positively refusing to allow his linen to be changed. His thin, gray beard, which had been long unshaven, stood out here and there upon the clay-coloured skin like the bristles of a half worn out brush. Beneath his shirt he wore an old, dirty, ragged woollen jacket, and from the bony hand which hung out of the bed was exhibited a cotton, snuff-begrimed pocket-handkerchief, whose colour no artist, however skilful, could depict.

He might have passed for one from whom the vital spark had fled, but for two glaring eyes, which burnt with feverish glow in the hollow depths of their sunken orbits. The fierce, restless gleam, which shot upwards from the dark shadows imprinted by wasting disease around the cheek-bone, appeared to concentrate the whole spirit, life, and energy of the man; it told a tale of burning disquietude and restless anxiety. Sometimes his features would appear contracted by acute agony, then, again, the convulsive movements of the hands, and sudden starting of the weakened body, bespoke his deep despair at being thus riveted to a bed of sickness, while the important interests with which he was entrusted called for his utmost activity and zeal. His mind, thus continually overexcited and on the stretch, assumed a wild and wandering form, permitting strange and unconnected expressions to escape his lips unconsciously; and these fits of wandering soon assumed the more fearful shape of actual raving and delirium, from which he recovered as one wakes from a frightful dream or painful vision.

In pursuance with the excellent advice of Doctor Baleinier, who considered Rodin as wholly unfit to occupy himself with any affairs of moment, Father d'Aigrigny had hitherto avoided replying to the questions put by Rodin

touching the state of the Rennepont affair, so deeply interesting to him, and which he trembled to think might be either compromised, or utterly lost, through the disastrous inaction of him who alone held all its different threads, and could alone bring it to maturity.

This silence on the part of D'Aigrigny, added to the complete ignorance in which the patient had been kept of all that had occurred since his unfortunate seizure, materially increased the irritation of Rodin, and rendered him still more exasperated at being thus tied to a sick-bed, when so much remained to be done.

Such was the moral and physical situation of Rodin, when, spite of his prohibition, Cardinal Malipieri entered his chamber.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SNARE.

In order that we may the better understand the torture of Rodin, reduced to inactivity by his illness, and to explain the importance of the visit of Cardinal Malipieri, let us, in a few words, recall the audacious views of the ambitious Jesuit, who believed himself the rival of Sixtus Quintus, whilst waiting to become his equal.

To reach, by aid of the success of the Rennepont affair, to the generalship of his Order; and then, in case of an abdication almost foreseen, to make sure, by a splendid system of corruption, of the majority of the Sacred College, in order to mount the pontifical throne; and then, by means of a change in the statutes of the Company of Jesus, to enfeoff this powerful society to the holy seat, instead of leaving it in its present independence, to equal, and almost control the papal power, — such were the secret projects of Rodin.

As to the possibility, that was consecrated by numerous precedents; for many simple monks or priests had been suddenly elevated to the pontifical dignity.

As to the morality of the thing, the accession of the Borgias, of Julius II., and many other strange vicars of Christ, in comparison with whom Rodin was a venerable saint, excused, authorised the pretensions of the Jesuit.

Although the aim of Rodin's secret intrigues at Rome had been until then enveloped in the deepest mystery, there was a suspicion aroused as to his private understanding with a great number of the members of the

Sacred College. A section of this college, at the head of which was the Cardinal Malipieri, having been disturbed, the cardinal profited by his journey to France to try and penetrate the dark designs of the Jesuit. If, in the scene we are about to paint, the cardinal was so obstinately bent in his resolution of conferring with the reverend father in spite of his refusal, it was because the prelate hoped, as we shall presently see, to contrive to surprise by stratagem a secret until then so completely hidden as to the intrigues which he believed to be going on at Rome.

It was, therefore, in the midst of circumstances so important, so vital, that Rodin found himself a prey to a malady which paralysed his strength, at a moment when more than ever he required all his activity, all the resources of his understanding.

After having remained for some moments motionless near the door, the cardinal, still holding his bottle under his nose, slowly approached Rodin's bed.

Rodin, irritated at this pertinacity, and desirous of escaping an interview, which, for many reasons, was particularly disagreeable to him, turned his head suddenly towards the side of his bed, and pretended to sleep.

The prelate, quite regardless of this pretence, and determined to profit by the state of weakness in which he knew Rodin to be, drew a chair, and, in spite of his repugnance, seated himself at the Jesuit's bedside.

"My reverend and very dear father, how do you find yourself?" he inquired, in a honeyed tone, which his Italian accent rendered even more hypocritical.

Rodin turned a deaf ear, breathed loudly, and made no reply.

The cardinal, although he had his gloves on, took, not without disgust, the hand of the Jesuit in his own, shook it slightly, and said, in a still louder tone:

"My reverend and very dear father, answer me, I entreat you!"

Rodin could not repress a movement of angry impatience, but still remained mute.

The cardinal was not a man to be repulsed so easily; and thus he again shook, and somewhat more vigorously, the Jesuit's arm, repeating with phlegmatic tenacity, which would have overcome the endurance of the most patient man in the world:

"My reverend and dear father, as you are not asleep, listen to me, I pray of you!"

Suffering acute pain, and exasperated by the obstinacy of the prelate, Rodin turned his head abruptly, fixed on the Roman his hollow eyes, glaring with sombre fire, and, with his lips contracted with a sardonic smile, he said, in a bitter tone:

"You are determined, then, monseigneur, to see me embalmed, as you said just now, and exposed in the lighted chapel, as you will come thus to increase my anguish, and hasten my end!"

"I, my dear father? What are you saying?" and the cardinal raised his eyes to heaven, as if to call on it to testify the tender interest he took in the Jesuit.

"I say what I just now heard, monseigneur; for the wainscot is but thin," added Rodin, with increased bitterness.

"If by that you would infer that I desire for you, with all the strength of my soul — that I desire for you a Christian and exemplary end, — oh, you are not deceived, my very dear father! You have perfectly understood me; for it would be most grateful to me to see you, after a life so well spent, a subject of adoration to the faithful."

"And I — I tell you, monseigneur," cried Rodin, in a weak and broken voice, "I tell you that it is an absurd ferocity in giving vent to such wishes in the presence of a sick man in a desperate condition. Yes," he

continued, with increasing animation, which contrasted strangely with his weakened state; "but take care, for, mark me, if I am thus tormented, if I am beset thus incessantly, if I am not left to groan out in my agony, without being disturbed, you will force me to die in an unchristian manner. I warn you of this; and if you rely on an edifying spectacle, to turn it to account, you are very much mistaken."

This outburst of anger had painfully fatigued Rodin, who fell back on his pillow, and wiped his cracked and bleeding lips with his dirty cotton pocket-handkerchief.

"Come, come, calm yourself, my very dear father," continued the cardinal, with a paternal air, "do not entertain such sad thoughts; no doubt, Providence has great designs in store for you, since you have been already delivered from such serious peril. Let us hope that he will still save you from that which now menaces you."

Rodin replied by a hoarse murmur, and turned over with his back to the cardinal.

The imperturbable prelate continued:

"The views of Providence are not limited to your safety, my very dear father; but its power has been manifested also, in another way. What I am about to tell you is of the utmost importance, and, therefore, listen to me attentively."

Rodin, without turning around, said, in a tone of bitter anger, which betrayed real suffering:

"They wish for my death, — my chest is on fire, — my head burns, and they are pitiless. Oh, I suffer like the damned —"

"Already!" said the Roman, in a low voice, and with a malicious smile at his own sarcasm. Then, he said aloud:

"Allow me to insist, my very dear father, — make a little effort to listen to me; you will not regret it."

Rodin, still stretched out in the bed, raised towards

heaven, but without uttering a syllable, and with despairing gesture, his two clasped hands still clenching his cotton handkerchief, and which then fell enfeebled beside his body.

The cardinal shrugged his shoulders slightly, and then slowly accentuated each syllable of the following words, that not one might escape Rodin:

"My dear father, Providence has willed it that, during your paroxysms of delirium, you unconsciously made very important revelations."

And the prelate waited with listless curiosity the result of this pious snare, which he spread for the enfeebled mind of the Jesuit.

But he still turned away from the cardinal, and did not appear to have heard him, but remained perfectly mute.

"Doubtless you are reflecting on what I have said, my dear father," resumed the cardinal. "You are right; for it involves most grave facts. Yes, I repeat to you that Providence has permitted that, during your delirium, your language should betray your most secret thoughts; revealing, fortunately to me alone, things that compromise you in the most serious manner. In brief, during your attack of delirium last night, which lasted for two hours nearly, you revealed the concealed aim of your intrigues at Rome, with several members of our Sacred College." And the cardinal, rising gently, went to lean over the bed, in order to detect the expression of Rodin's countenance.

Rodin did not give him time for this.

As a corpse, submitted to the action of the voltaic pile, moves with sudden and strange jerks, so Rodin bounded in his bed, turned around, and suddenly rose in his seat, as he heard the last words uttered by the cardinal.

"He betrays himself," said the cardinal, in a low voice, and in Italian.

Then, resuming his seat hastily, he fastened on the Jesuit his eyes, sparkling with joy.

Although he had not heard Malipieri's exclamation, although he had not remarked the gratified expression of his countenance, Rodin, in spite of his feebleness, at once comprehended the grave imprudence of his first too significant movement. He passed his hand slowly over his brow, as if he experienced a kind of vertigo, then he cast around surprised and wild looks, lifting to his trembling lips his old pocket-handkerchief, which he bit mechanically for several seconds.

"Your extreme emotion, your alarm, alas, confirm the sad discovery I have made!" continued the cardinal, triumphing more and more at the success of his stratagem, and seeing himself on the point of penetrating at last a secret so important. "So now, my very dear father," he added, "you will comprehend how deep your interest must be for entering into the minutest details as to your plans and accomplices at Rome, in order, my dear father, that you may hope for the indulgence of the holy seat, especially if your confession be explicit enough, so circumstantial, that they will supply all the gaps which were inevitably left in a disclosure made during the paroxysms of a burning delirium."

Rodin, recovered from his first emotion, perceived but too late that he had been tricked, and had compromised himself gravely, not by his words, but by a movement of surprise and alarm, dangerously significant.

In fact, the Jesuit was for a moment afraid that he had betrayed himself during his delirium when he heard himself charged with dark intrigues with Rome; but, after a few minutes' reflection, the Jesuit, despite the weakness of his frame, said to himself with much shrewdness:

"If this crafty Roman knew my secret, he would be too cunning to let me know it; he has, therefore, only

suspicions, increased by the involuntary movement which I could not at the moment repress."

Rodin wiped away the cold sweat which dripped from his burning brow. The excitement of the scene increased his sufferings, and aggravated his condition, already so alarming. Overcome by fatigue, he could no longer remain seated in his bed, and fell back heavily on his pillow.

"*Per Bacco!*" said the cardinal, in a low voice, alarmed at the expression of the Jesuit's countenance, "if he were to die without saying a word, and so escape my snare, so skilfully spread!" and, leaning over Rodin suddenly, the prelate said to him:

"What ails you now, my very dear father?"

"I feel so weak, monseigneur; what I suffer no words can express."

"Let us hope, my very dear father, that this crisis will not have any injurious result; but that, on the contrary, it may so happen, that it will be advantageous for the safety of your soul that you should make to me, without any delay, a most complete revelation, perfect in all points; and should this avowal exhaust your strength, why, the life eternal is worth infinitely more than this perishable existence."

"What avowal do you refer to, monseigneur?" inquired Rodin, with feeble voice and sarcastic tone.

"How! What avowal?" cried the amazed cardinal, "why, the avowal of those dangerous intrigues which you have machinated at Rome."

"What intrigues?" inquired Rodin.

"Why, the intrigues you revealed during your delirium," replied the prelate, with increased and anxious impatience. "Your disclosures were not sufficiently explicit, — why, then, should you hesitate so culpably to render them complete?"

"My disclosures — were — explicit — You assure me — of that?" said Rodin, pausing at every word, so

great was his difficulty of breathing; but his energetic will, his presence of mind, did not for an instant forsake him.

"Yes, I repeat to you," resumed the cardinal, "that, except some few connecting links, your disclosures were most explicit."

"Then, what is the — use — of — repeating them?" and the same ironical smile played over the blue lips of Rodin.

"What is the use?" exclaimed the irritated prelate. "Why, to deserve pardon; for, if we accord indulgence and remission to the repentant sinner who confesses his faults, we award anathema and malediction to the hardened sinner."

"Oh — what torture! This is dying by a slow fire," murmured Rodin; then saying aloud, "Since I have disclosed all — I have — nothing more — to — tell you — you — know all."

"I know all! Yes, unquestionably I know all," replied the prelate, in a voice of thunder; "but how have I learned it? By the avowal you made, without even having the consciousness of what you were doing; and do you suppose that that will account to you for anything? No, no! Believe me, the moment is solemn; death threatens you, yes, it threatens you; tremble, then, at uttering a sacrilegious lie!" cried the prelate, more and more enraged; and, shaking Rodin's arm very forcibly, "Dread eternal flames if you dare to deny what you know to be the truth. Do you deny it?"

"I will deny nothing," articulated Rodin, painfully; "but leave me in quiet."

"Then, at length God inspires you," said the cardinal, with a sigh of satisfaction.

Then, believing he had attained his aim, he continued:

"Hearken to the voice of the Lord; that will guide you in safety, my dear father. So then, you deny nothing?"

"I was — delirious — I — could — not — then — deny (oh, how I suffer!" added Rodin, as if by parenthesis) — "I can — not, therefore — deny — my — father — I may have — uttered — during — my paroxysm — "

"But when these pretended follies are in accordance with reality," replied the prelate, furious at being again frustrated in his aim; "but when delirium becomes an involuntary, providential revelation — "

"Cardinal Malipieri, your trick — is — not even — equal — to my agony," replied Rodin, in a faint voice. "The proof that I have — not — told you — my — secret — if I — have — a secret — is — that you are anxious — that — I should — disclose it — now — "

And, in spite of his anguish, in spite of his increasing feebleness, the Jesuit summoned strength enough to raise himself partly erect in his bed, look the prelate steadfastly in his face, and confront him with a smile of devilish irony, after which Rodin fell back exhausted on his pillow, pressing his two clenched hands against his breast, and uttering a long sigh of agony.

"Malediction! This infernal Jesuit has detected me," said the cardinal, stamping with rage; "he saw that his first movement compromised him, and is now on his guard. I shall get nothing out of him unless I take advantage of his weakness, and by dint of continued urging, threats, alarms — "

The prelate could not finish, for the door opened suddenly, and Père d'Aigrigny entered, exclaiming, with a burst of inexpressible joy, "Excellent news!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE GOOD NEWS.

By the alteration in Père d'Aigrigny's features, his pallor, and his faltering step, it was plainly perceptible that the terrible scene at Notre-Dame had had a violent effect on his health; yet his countenance became radiant and triumphant as, entering Rodin's chamber, he exclaimed:

"Excellent news!"

At these words, Rodin started in spite of his prostrated state, and raised his head quickly; his eyes were uneasy, anxious, penetrating, as, with his withered hand, he made a sign to Père d'Aigrigny to approach his bed, and said to him, in a voice so low and broken as scarcely to be heard:

"I feel myself very bad — the cardinal has almost finished me — but if this excellent news — refers to — the Rennepont affair — the thought — that devours — me — and — of which — no one speaks — to me — I feel — that I shall — recover."

"Recover then!" exclaimed Père d'Aigrigny, forgetful of the instruction of Doctor Baleinier, who had forbidden Rodin to be spoken to on any matters of serious business. "Yes," repeated Père d'Aigrigny, "be saved — read — and rejoice — for what you foretold begins to be realised."

So saying, he drew from his pocket a paper, which he handed to Rodin, who clutched it with a greedy and trembling hand.

Some minutes previously, Rodin had really been incapable of continuing his conversation with the cardinal, even had prudence allowed of it; he would also have been incapable of reading a single line, so much was his vision troubled and dimmed; yet, at the words of Père d'Aigrigny, he felt such a spring, such hope, that, by a powerful effort of energy and will, he raised himself on his seat, and, with his mind alert, his look intelligent and animated, he read rapidly the paper which Père d'Aigrigny had just handed to him.

The cardinal, amazed at this sudden revival, asked himself if he saw really and truly the same man who, some minutes before, had fallen overpowered on his bed almost without consciousness.

Rodin had scarcely read before he uttered a cry of stifled joy, saying, in a tone impossible to describe:

"Thus, then, one is out of the way, — it begins — it works!"

Then, shutting his eyes with a kind of ecstasy, a smile of proud triumph spread over his features, and rendered him even more hideous as they disclosed his yellow and decayed teeth. His emotion was so excessive that the paper he had just read fell from his tremulous hand.

"He has fainted!" cried Père d'Aigrigny, with disquietude, and stooping over Rodin. "It is my fault; I forgot that the doctor had forbidden me to confer with him on serious matters."

"No, no — do not — reproach yourself," said Rodin, in a faint voice, and raising himself up half erect in order to assure Père d'Aigrigny. "This unexpected joy will — perhaps — cause — my cure — yes — I know not what I experience — but see — look at my cheeks — I seem — for the first time since — I have been — nailed to this bed of misery — that they have some — colour in them — I almost feel — warmth."

Rodin said true. A moist and slight flush suddenly

appeared in his chill and livid cheeks; his very voice, although still very weak, became less tremulous, and he exclaimed, with so much excitement that Père d'Aigrigny and the prelate both trembled:

"The first success is the herald of more — I read into futurity — yes — yes," added Rodin, with an air more and more assured, "our cause will triumph — all the — members — of the execrable — Rennepont family — will be crushed — crushed — and that — very shortly; you will see — you — "

Then, interrupting himself, Rodin fell back on his pillow, saying:

"Ah, this joy suffocates me, — my voice fails me — "

"What is this?" inquired the cardinal of Père d'Aigrigny.

The abbé replied, in a tone of intense hypocrisy:

"One of the heirs of the Rennepont family, a wretched workman, worn out by excesses and debauchery, died three days ago, after a most infamous orgie, in which they were braving the cholera with sacrilegious impiety. It was only to-day, in consequence of the severe indisposition which has kept me within doors, and from another circumstance, that I could obtain possession of the properly attested will and testament of this victim of intemperance and irreligion. Besides, I proclaim it to the praise of his reverence (he pointed to Rodin) who had said, 'The worst enemies that the descendants of that infamous renegade can have are their own bad passions. Let them, therefore, be our auxiliaries against this impious race.' And so it has been with this Jacques Rennepont."

"You see," continued Rodin, in a voice so exhausted that it soon became almost unintelligible, "the punishment — is beginning — already — one — of the Renneponts — is dead — and — remember — that *acte de dices*," added the Jesuit, pointing to the paper which the Père

d'Aigrigny held in his hand, "will one day be worth forty millions (1,000,000*l.*) to the Company of Jesus — because — I have — "

Rodin's lips only completed this sentence. For some instants the sound of his voice was so faint that it ended by being no longer audible, and was completely lost; his larynx, contracted by a violent emotion, did not allow a single sound to be heard.

The Jesuit, far from being disturbed by this incident, completed his phrase by a kind of pantomimic gesture; raising his head proudly, his features assuming a bold and haughty air, he tapped his forehead twice or thrice with the end of his forefinger, thus indicating that it was to his intelligence and his direction that this happy result was due.

But Rodin soon fell back on his couch, overcome, exhausted, breathless, and powerless, except to raise his pocket-handkerchief to his parched lips. The excellent news, as Père d'Aigrigny called it, had not cured Rodin; and it was for a minute only he found sufficient strength to forget his agony, and then the slight flush with which his cheeks were coloured rapidly faded, his face became again livid, his sufferings, suspended for the moment, increased so intensely that he writhed in convulsions beneath his bedclothes, as he lay with his cheek flat on the pillow, stretching above his head his two arms as straight and stiff as bars of iron.

After this crisis, as intense as it was rapid, during which the Père d'Aigrigny and the prelate stood anxiously gazing at him, Rodin, in whose face a violent perspiration had broken out, made them a sign that he suffered less, and wished to drink a draught, which he indicated as being on the table. Père d'Aigrigny fetched it, and whilst the cardinal, with evident disgust, supported Rodin, the Père d'Aigrigny administered to the sick man several tablespoonfuls of the potion, whose immediate effect was to calm him greatly.

"Shall I call M. Rousselet?" asked Père d'Aigrigny of Rodin, when he again laid down in his bed.

Rodin made a negative gesture; then, with a fresh exertion, he raised his right hand, opened it wide, and moved his forefinger over it, making a sign to Père d'Aigrigny, which directed his attention to a bureau placed in a corner of the chamber, that, being unable to speak, he wished to write.

"I fully understand your reverence," said Père d'Aigrigny to him; "but first calm yourself. Presently, if there be occasion for it, I will give you writing-materials."

Two knocks loudly struck, not at the door of Rodin's chamber, but at the outer door of the room beyond, interrupted this scene. From prudential motives, and that his conversation with Rodin might be entirely secret, Père d'Aigrigny had requested M. Rousselet to remain in the first of the three rooms.

Père d'Aigrigny, after having passed through the second room, opened the door of the antechamber, where he found M. Rousselet, who handed him a tolerably thick envelope, saying:

"I beg your pardon, father, for having disturbed you; but I was requested to give you these papers without any delay."

"Thank you, M. Rousselet," replied Père d'Aigrigny, adding, "When do you expect M. Baleinier?"

"He will not be long, father, for he is anxious before night to perform the very painful operation, which will have so decisive an effect on the state of Père Rodin, and I am making all the preparations for it," added M. Rousselet, showing a singular and formidable apparatus to Père d'Aigrigny, who looked at it with affright.

"I do not know if it is a serious symptom," said the Jesuit; "but the reverend father has suddenly lost his voice entirely."

"This is the third time in eight days that this has occurred to him," said M. Rousselet; "and M. Baleinier's

operation will act equally on the larynx and the lungs."

"Is this operation painful?" inquired the Père d'Aigrigny.

"There is not in my opinion any surgical operation more terrible," said the pupil; "and that is the reason why M. Baleinier has concealed its importance from Père Rodin."

"Will you be so kind as to remain here until M. Baleinier arrives, and send him to us instantly?" said Père d'Aigrigny, and then returned to the patient. Seating himself at the bedside, he then said, pointing to the letter:

"Here are various conflicting reports relative to the different persons of the Rennepont family which appear to deserve peculiar attention, my indisposition not having allowed me to see anything myself for several days, for I have risen to-day for the first time; but I do not know, *mon père*," he added, addressing Rodin, "if your state permits you to attend to me?"

Rodin made a gesture at once so supplicating and despairing, that Père d'Aigrigny felt there would be at least as much danger in refusing Rodin's desire as to accede to it; and, turning towards the cardinal, who was still in dire distress at having been unable to extract the Jesuit's secret, he said to him, with respectful deference, whilst he pointed to the letter:

"Your eminence will permit me?"

The prelate bowed his head, and added:

"Your affairs are ours, my dear father, and the church must always rejoice in that which rejoices your glorious company."

Père d'Aigrigny unsealed the letter, which contained several notes in different handwritings.

After having read the first, his features became suddenly suffused, and he said, in a serious and deep tone:

"This is a misfortune — a great misfortune."

Rodin turned his head towards him suddenly, looking at him with an unquiet and interrogative air.

"Florine is dead of the cholera," continued Père d'Aigrigny; "and, what is worse," added the reverend father, crushing the note in his hand, "before she died, the miserable creature confessed to Mlle. de Cardoville that for a long time she had been a spy over her according to your reverence's orders."

Unquestionably Florine's death and the confessions she had made to her mistress very much thwarted Rodin's projects, for he emitted a kind of inarticulate murmur, and, in spite of their languor, his features expressed how deeply he was annoyed.

Père d'Aigrigny read another note, and said:

"This note, relative to Maréchal Simon, is not absolutely bad; but it is far from being satisfactory, for it announces some amelioration in his position. We shall see, however, by information from another source, if this note is to be quite relied upon."

Rodin made a gesture of impatience, and signed to Père d'Aigrigny to make haste in his reading.

The reverend father read thus:

"'We are assured that for some days past the mind of the maréchal appears less disturbed, less agitated, less annoyed; he has lately passed two hours with his daughters, which had not occurred for a long time before. The stern countenance of his soldier Dagobert becoming more and more relaxed, we may look upon that symptom as a certain proof of a sensible amelioration in the maréchal's state of mind.

"'Recognised by their writing, the last anonymous letters having been returned to the postman by the soldier Dagobert, without being opened by the maréchal, we advise other means to be tried to make them reach him.'"

Looking then at Rodin, Père d'Aigrigny said to him:

"Your reverence, no doubt, agrees with me that this note might have been more satisfactory."

Rodin bowed his head. There might be read in that contracted countenance how deeply he suffered from his inability to speak, as twice he raised his hand to his throat, looking with anguish at D'Aigrigny.

"Ah!" exclaimed Père d'Aigrigny, with anger and bitterness, as he read another note, "for a fortunate day, this one brings much ill luck with it."

At these words, Rodin, turning suddenly towards D'Aigrigny, extended towards him his trembling hands, inquiring by look and gesture.

The cardinal, showing the same uneasiness, said to Père d'Aigrigny, "What does this note inform you, my dear father?"

"We believed the residence of M. Hardy in our house entirely unknown," answered Père d'Aigrigny; "and now it is feared that Agricola Baudoin has discovered the abode of his former employer, and has sent him a letter by the intervention of a man in the establishment. Thus," continued Père d'Aigrigny, with anger, "during the three last days, whilst I have been unable to go and visit M. Hardy in the pavilion, one of the servants has allowed himself to be corrupted. There is a one-eyed man whom I have always distrusted, — the villain! — but no, I will not give credit to this treason; its results would be too deplorable, for I know better than any person how matters stand, and I aver that such a correspondence would destroy everything. By awakening in M. Hardy certain recollections — ideas hardly lulled to rest, it would ruin, perhaps, in a single day all I have effected during his residence amongst us in the house of retreat; but fortunately in this note there is only allusion to doubts, fears; and the other particulars, which I rely on as more certain, will not, I trust, confirm these."

"My dear father," said the cardinal, "do not despair

yet. The good cause has always the support of the Lord."

This assurance seemed to give the Père d'Aigrigny but small comfort, and he remained pensive and dejected, whilst Rodin, stretched on his bed of pain, shuddered convulsively a paroxysm of mute anger as he reflected on this fresh check.

"Let us see this last note," said the Père d'Aigrigny, after a silent meditation. "I have sufficient confidence in the person who sends it to me not to doubt of the strict exactness of the information he forwards to me. I only hope this adverse statement may be completely refuted."

In order that we may not interrupt the chain of facts contained in this last note, which was calculated to make so terrible an impression on the actors in this scene, we will leave the reader to supply in his imagination all the exclamations of surprise, rage, hatred, and fear, of D'Aigrigny, and the frightful pantomimic gesticulations of Rodin, during the reading of this redoubtable document, the result of the observations of a secret and faithful agent of the reverend father.

CHAPTER XX.

THE SECRET NOTE.

PÈRE D'AIGRIGNY read as follows:

"'Three days since, the Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, who had never been to Mlle. de Cardoville's, went to that young lady's residence at half-past one o'clock P. M. and remained there until five o'clock. Almost immediately after his departure two servants quitted the hôtel, one going to Maréchal Simon, and the other to Agricola Baudoin, the working smith, and afterwards to Prince Djalma.

"'Yesterday about noon Maréchal Simon and his two daughters visited Mlle. de Cardoville, and shortly afterwards the Abbé Gabriel arrived there, accompanied by Agricola Baudoin.

"'A long conference ensued between the different personages and Mlle. de Cardoville, and they remained together until half-past three o'clock.

"'The Maréchal Simon, who came in a carriage, returned on foot with his two daughters; all three appeared much satisfied; and, in one of the most private walks in the Champs Elysées, Maréchal Simon embraced his daughters with great affection and cordiality.

"'The Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont and Agricola Baudoin came out last.

"'The Abbé Gabriel returned to his home, as we learned afterwards; the smith, whom we had many reasons for watching, went to a wine-shop in the Rue de la Harpe. We followed him. He asked for a bottle of

wine, seating himself in an obscure part of the room on the left hand. He did not drink, but seemed deeply preoccupied. We conjectured he was waiting for some one.

"'About half an hour afterwards a man arrived, about thirty years of age, dark, tall, blind of the left eye, dressed in a mulberry-coloured coat and black trousers. He was bareheaded. He did not live far off. He seated himself with the smith.

"'A very animated conversation ensued, of which, unfortunately, we could not hear a word. At the end of half an hour, Agricola Baudoin placed in the hands of the one-eyed man a small packet, which appeared to contain gold, judging from its small size and the air of deep gratitude of the one-eyed man, who then took from Agricola Baudoin, with much ceremony, a letter, which he appeared to request him to deliver instantly, and which the one-eyed man placed carefully in his pocket. After which they separated, the smith saying, "To-morrow then!"

"'After this interview, we thought it advisable to follow the one-eyed man; he quitted the Rue de la Harpe, crossed the Luxembourg, and entered the house of retreat of the Rue de Vangirard.

"'The next day we went very early near the wine shop in the Rue de la Harpe, for we did not know the hour of meeting arranged between the one-eyed man and Agricola. We watched until one o'clock, and then the smith arrived.

"'As we were carefully disguised, we entered the wine-shop and seated ourself close to the smith without exciting his suspicion. The one-eyed man soon came, and handed him a letter with a black seal.

"'At the sight of this letter, Agricola Baudoin was so much moved, that we distinctly saw a tear drop on his moustache.

"'The letter was very short, for the smith was not

two minutes in reading it; but yet he seemed so satisfied, so happy, that he bounded with joy from his seat, and cordially squeezed the hand of the one-eyed man. He then appeared to ask something which the other refused. At length, he seemed to yield, and they left the wine-shop together.

"'We followed at a distance, and, as yesterday, the one-eyed man entered the house in the Rue de Vangirard. Agricola, after having accompanied him to the door, for a long time remained lurking about the walls, as if he were studying the localities, and from time to time wrote down something in a pocketbook.

"'The smith then walked away rapidly towards the Place de l'Odeon, where he took a cabriolet. We did the same, and followed him to the hôtel of Mlle. de Cardoville in the Rue d'Anjou.

"'By a fortunate chance, at the moment when Agricola entered the hôtel, a carriage with Mlle. de Cardoville's livery left it. The head groom of this young lady was in it, with a very ill-looking man, miserably dressed, and very pale.

"'This incident, being very extraordinary, deserved attention, and we did not lose sight of this carriage, which went straight to the Prefecture of Police.

"'Mlle. de Cardoville's master of the horse first alighted, and then the ill-looking man; both entered the office of the *agens de surveillance*; half an hour afterwards, the master of the horse only came out, and, getting into the carriage, went to the Palais de Justice, to the office of the king's attorney-general, where he remained for nearly half an hour, and then returned to the Hôtel de Cardoville in the Rue d'Anjou.

"'We have discovered by a certain source, that the same day, about eight o'clock in the evening, Messieurs d'Ormesson and Valbelle, leading counsel, and the Juge d'Instruction, who has received the complaint of personal incarceration of Mlle. de Cardoville as to her con-

finement at Doctor Baleinier's, had with the young lady (at the Hôtel de Cardoville) a conference, which extended until midnight, and at which Agricola Baudoin and two other workmen of the factory of M. Hardy were present.

"'This day Prince Djalma went to Maréchal Simon's, and remained there for three hours and a half. At the end of this time the maréchal and the prince went apparently to Mlle. de Cardoville's, for the carriage stopped at her door in the Rue d'Anjou. An unforeseen accident prevented us from completing the statement of this fact.

"'We have learned that a writ of summons has been issued against one Leonard, the former factotum of Baron Tripeaud. This Leonard is suspected of being the author of the fire at the factory of M. François Hardy. Agricola Baudoin and two of his comrades have described a man who offered a striking resemblance to Leonard.

"'From all this, it evidently results that, during the last ten days, the Hôtel de Cardoville is the focus, whence proceed, and around which radiate, the most active and multiplied measures, which seem always to concern Maréchal Simon, his daughters, and M. François Hardy,—measures of which Mlle. de Cardoville, the Abbé Gabriel, and Agricola Baudoin are the most indefatigable, and, it is to be feared, most dangerous agents.'"

When we compare this note with the other particulars, and recur to the past, there result most overwhelming discoveries for the reverend fathers.

Gabriel had had long and frequent conferences with Adrienne, who was until then unknown to him.

Agricola Baudoin was in communication with M. François Hardy, and justice was in the trace of the authors and exciters of the riot which had ruined and burnt down the factory of Baron Tripeaud's competitor.

It appeared almost certain that Mlle. de Cardoville had had an interview with the Prince Djalma.

This combination of facts evidently proved that, faithful to the threat she had made Rodin, when the twofold perfidy of the reverend father had been unfolded, Mlle. de Cardoville was actively occupied in uniting around her the dispersed members of her family, in order to induce them to league against the common and dangerous enemy, whose detestable projects, being thus unveiled and boldly met, could not have any chance of success.

We may, therefore, understand what an overwhelming effect this note produced on the Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin, — on Rodin, in agony and nailed to a bed of sickness, and rendered powerless, whilst he saw his laboriously constructed scaffolding falling asunder piece by piece.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE OPERATION.

We give up in despair every attempt to paint the physiognomy, contortions, and demeanour of Rodin, during the reading of the note, which appeared to ruin his hopes so long cherished; all seemed to fail him at once, and at the moment, too, when an almost superhuman confidence in the success of his plottings had given him energy sufficient to subdue his disease. Hardly out of a painful agony, one fixed, devouring thought had agitated him even to delirium. What progress in good or in evil had this affair, so important to him, made during his illness? At first they had informed him of a piece of welcome news, — the death of Jacques; but very speedily the advantages of this decease, which reduced the Renneponts family from seven to six, were destroyed. Of what use was this death when this family dispersed, struck whilst isolated with such infernal perseverance, were united, and at last fully conscious of the enemies who, for so long a time, had been stabbing at them in the dark? If all these wounded, bruised, and broken hearts came into communion, consoled each other, and informed one another, by lending each to the other a firm and mutual support, their cause was gained, the vast heritage of the Renneponts escaped the reverend fathers.

What was to be done? What to be done?

Strange potency of the human will! Rodin has one foot in the grave, he is almost in extreme agony, his voice has failed him; and yet this spirit, so determined

and full of resource, does not yet despair. If a miracle should now restore him to health, then that unbroken confidence in the success of his projects, which has already given him the power of resisting a sickness under which so many others have succumbed, — this confidence whispers to him that he could still remedy, repair all; but he requires health, life.

Health! Life! — whilst even his physician cannot determine whether or not he will survive so many shocks, if he can undergo so terrible an operation. Health! Life! — when but just now Rodin heard talk of the solemn burial they intended to bestow upon him.

Yes, health! Life! He will have them, he said. Yes, he would live till now, and he has lived. Why, then, should he not live a great while longer?

Then he will live! He will!

All we have now written Rodin had thought over in a second. His features, agitated by this kind of mental torture, must have revealed something very strange, for D'Aigrigny and the cardinal gazed on him silent and aghast.

Once resolved to live, in order to sustain a desperate struggle against the Rennepont family, Rodin acted accordingly; and thus, for some minutes, D'Aigrigny and the prelate believed him under the influence of a dream.

By an effort of will of unheard-of energy, and as if he had been moved by a spring, Rodin flung himself out of bed, dragging with him a sheet, which clung to him like a shroud behind his livid and meagre body. The chamber was cold, but the perspiration dropped from the Jesuit's brow, whilst his bare and bony feet left their moist imprint on the floor.

"Rash man! What are you doing? It is death!" cried Père d'Aigrigny, rushing towards Rodin, in order to compel him to return to his bed.

But he, extending one of his skeleton arms, as hard

as iron, pushed D'Aigrigny from him with a vigour that was inconceivable when we remember the state of exhaustion in which he had so long remained.

"He has the strength of an epileptic in his fit!" said D'Aigrigny to the prelate, as he recovered his balance.

Rodin, with a slow step, advanced towards the bureau, in which were the materials which Doctor Baleinier daily used for writing his prescriptions; then, seating himself at this table, the Jesuit took paper and a pen, and began writing with a firm hand.

His composed, slow, and certain movements had in them something of that measured reflection which is observable in somnambulists.

Mute and immovable, hardly conscious whether they dreamed or not, at the sight of this prodigy, the cardinal and Père d'Aigrigny remained thunderstruck at the incredible *sang-froid* of Rodin, who, half naked, was writing with perfect tranquillity.

Father d'Aigrigny, however, advanced towards him, saying:

"My dear father, this is madness."

Rodin shrugged his shoulders, turned his head towards him, and, interrupting him by a gesture, made a sign to him to approach and read what he had written.

The reverend father, expecting to see some wild effusions of a wandering brain, took the sheet of paper, whilst Rodin began another note.

"Monseigneur," exclaimed D'Aigrigny, "read this!"

The cardinal read the note, and returned it to D'Aigrigny, in whose amazement he participated.

"It is filled with reason, ability, and resource, and must neutralise the dangerous understanding between the Abbé Gabriel and Mlle. de Cardoville, who seem, in fact, the most dangerous ringleaders of this coalition."

"It is really miraculous," said D'Aigrigny.

"Ah, my dear father," said the cardinal, in a whisper, struck by these words of the Jesuit, and shaking his head

with an expression of deep regret, "what a pity we are the sole witnesses of what has occurred! What an admirable miracle might be made of this! A man at the last agony thus suddenly revived! By presenting the thing in a certain way, we might revive the idea of Lazarus."

"What an idea, monseigneur!" said Père d'Aigrigny, in a low tone; "it is perfect — it must not be lost sight of — it is most acceptable and —"

This little innocent miracle-inventing plot was interrupted by Rodin, who, turning his head, made a sign to D'Aigrigny to come towards him, and then handed him another sheet, accompanied by a small slip of paper, on which were written these words:

"To be done within an hour."

Père d'Aigrigny read the other note rapidly, and cried:

"Really, I had not thought of that; and in this way the correspondence of Agricola Baudoin with M. Hardy, instead of being injurious, may produce the happiest results. In truth," continued the reverend father, in a low voice, and going close to the prelate, whilst Rodin continued to write, "I am amazed! I see — I read, but I can scarcely credit my eyesight. But just now exhausted, — dying, and now with his mind as clear and intelligent as ever. Are we then witnesses of one of those phenomena of somnambulism during which the soul acts and controls the body?"

Suddenly the door opened, and M. Baleinier entered.

At the sight of Rodin, seated at the desk and half naked, his bare feet on the floor, the doctor exclaimed, in a tone of reproach and alarm:

"Monseigneur — my father, it is sheer murder to allow this rash man to do this; if he has a fit of burning fever he must be tied down in his bed, and have on a straitwaistcoat."

So saying, Doctor Baleinier went quickly towards Rodin, and, taking him by the arm, expected to find

the epidermis dry and cold, but, on the contrary, his skin was flexible and almost moist.

The doctor, greatly surprised, was desirous of feeling the pulse of the left hand, which Rodin gave him, whilst he continued to write with the right.

"What a prodigy!" exclaimed the doctor, as he counted the pulsations of Rodin; "these eight days past, and this morning even, the pulse was sudden, intermittent, and hardly perceptible, and now it is quite smooth and regular. I am amazed! What has occurred? I cannot believe my eyes," he added, turning to the Abbé d'Aigrigny and the cardinal.

"The reverend father, first stricken with a loss of voice, has afterwards had a paroxysm of despair, so violent and furious, caused by bad news," said Pére d'Aigrigny, "that, for a moment, we were alarmed for his life; but, on the contrary, the reverend father found strength enough to go to the desk, where he has been writing for the last ten minutes with a clearness of reasoning, a fullness of expression, which has quite amazed monseigneur and myself."

"There is no doubt," exclaimed the doctor, "but that the violent paroxysm of despair he has undergone has created in him a violent perturbation which will prepare him admirably for that reacting crisis, which I am now almost sure of obtaining by the operation I meditate."

"Then you resolve on trying it?" said D'Aigrigny, in a low voice to Doctor Baleinier, whilst Rodin continued writing.

"I had my doubts even this morning, but in his present prepared state I should like to profit by the moment of unusual excitement, which I foresee will be followed by extreme lassitude."

"But," said the cardinal, "without this operation —"

"This crisis, so happy, so unlooked for, is unavailing, and its reaction may kill him, monseigneur."

"Have you warned him of the serious nature of the operation?"

"In great measure, monseigneur."

"Then now he should make up his mind."

"That is what I am about to do, monseigneur," said Doctor Baleinier; and going up to Rodin, who, still writing and reflecting, had not heard a word of this conversation, carried on in a low tone of voice, "Reverend father," said the doctor, in a firm tone, "would you wish within eight days to be on your feet again?"

Rodin made a gesture full of confidence, which implied:

"Why, I am on my feet now."

"Do not deceive yourself," replied the doctor; "this crisis is most propitious, but it will not last; and if you do not take advantage of it this very moment, and proceed to the operation of which I have mentioned a word or two to you, *ma foi!* I tell you bluntly and plainly, after such a shock, I will not answer for anything."

Rodin was the more impressed with these words as he had, half an hour before, experienced the short duration of the ephemeral *better* which D'Aigrigny's good news had caused him, and because he began again to feel a renewal of the oppression at his chest.

M. Baleinier, anxious to decide the sick man, and believing him to be irresolute, added:

"In a word, my reverend father, will you live or not?"

Rodin wrote rapidly these words, which he handed to the doctor:

"To live I would have my four limbs cut off. I am prepared for anything!"

And he made an effort to leave his seat.

"I must tell you, not to make you hesitate, reverend father, but that your courage may not be taken by surprise," added M. Baleinier, "that this operation is intensely painful."

Rodin shrugged his shoulders, and then, with a firm hand, wrote:

"Leave me my head — take all the rest!"

The doctor read these words aloud, and D'Aigrigny and the cardinal looked at each other, amazed at this indomitable courage.

"Reverend father," said Doctor Baleinier, "you must return to your bed."

Rodin wrote:

"Prepare everything — I have to write some very important orders — let me know when all is ready."

Then folding a paper, which he closed with a wafer, Rodin made a sign to D'Aigrigny to read the words he had penned, and which were:

"Send this note instantly to the agent who has written the anonymous letters to Maréchal Simon."

"This moment, reverend father," said D'Aigrigny, "I will confide it to a safe hand."

"Reverend father," said Baleinier to Rodin, "since you desire to write, lie down in the bed whilst we make our preparations."

Rodin made an approving sign and rose.

But the doctor's prognostic was already realised, and the Jesuit could scarcely remain erect for a moment, but fell back in the chair. He then looked at Doctor Baleinier with anguish, and his breathing became more and more thick.

The doctor, desirous of giving him courage, said to him:

"Do not distress yourself — but we must be quick; lean on me and Père d'Aigrigny."

By the aid of his two supporters, Rodin was enabled to regain his bed, and, sitting up in it, he pointed towards the inkstand and paper, which were handed to him; a blotting-book served him for a desk, and he continued writing on his knees, leaving off now and then to breathe, which he did with great difficulty as if he were choking, but remaining quite unconscious of what was passing around him.

"Reverend father," said Baleinier to D'Aigrigny, "are you capable of being one of my assistants and helping me in this operation? Have you this sort of courage?"

"No," replied the reverend father; "in the army I never could in my life assist at an amputation, — at the sight of blood thus shed my courage fails me."

"There will be no blood," said Doctor Baleinier; "but it is even worse than that. Will you therefore be so kind as to send me three of our reverend fathers who will aid me, and also oblige me by requesting M. Rousselet to come in with the instruments?"

D'Aigrigny left the room.

The prelate went up to Baleinier, and said to him in a low voice, pointing to Rodin:

"He is out of danger?"

"Yes, if he can go through the operation, monseigneur."

"And are you sure he can undergo it?"

"To him I should say yes; to you, monseigneur, I say, we hope so."

"And, if he sinks under it, will there be time to administer the sacrament to him in public with certain ceremonies, which will necessarily compel some delay?"

"It is probable that his agony will endure at least a quarter of an hour, monseigneur."

"That is a short time, but at least we must make the best of it," said the prelate.

And he withdrew to one of the windows, on the glass of which he began to play the tambourine with his fingers, whilst he reflected on the effects of the light of the funereal bier, which he so greatly desired to see raised over Rodin.

At this moment M. Rousselet entered, carrying a large square box under his arm, which he laid down on the marble slab of a commode.

"How many have you got ready?" inquired the doctor.

"Six, sir."

"Four will suffice; but it is as well to be prepared. The cotton is not too thick?"

"Look, sir."

"Quite right."

"And how is the reverend father?" inquired the pupil of his master.

"Hum — hum," replied the doctor, in a low key, "the chest is terribly oppressive, the respiration much impeded, the voice utterly gone — but still there is a chance."

"Ah, I fear, sir, that the reverend father cannot endure such frightful pain."

"There is still a chance, but in such a state we must run all risks. Now light the wax-taper, for I hear our assistants."

And at this moment the three congregationists, who were walking in the garden of the house of the Rue de Vangirard, entered the room, following the Abbé d'Aigrigny.

The two old men with their red and rosy gills, and the young one with his ascetic countenance, according to custom, were clothed in black, with square caps and white collars, and seemed perfectly prepared to aid the doctor in his terrible operation.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE TORTURE.

"REVEREND fathers," said Doctor Baleinier to the three congregationists, "I thank you for your kind aid. What you have to do is very simple, and, with the aid of the Lord, this operation will save our very dear Père Rodin."

The three black gowns raised their eyes to heaven with energy, and then all bowed as if but one man.

Rodin, still indifferent to all that was passing around him, had not ceased for one instant to write or reflect; yet, from time to time, in spite of this apparent calm, he experienced such a difficulty of respiration that Doctor Baleinier had turned towards him with great uneasiness when he heard the sort of stifled whistling which escaped from the patient's throat, and after making a sign to his assistant he approached Rodin, and said to him:

"Now then, reverend father, this is the important moment — courage."

No marks of fear were observable on the Jesuit's features, his countenance remained as impassive as a corpse, only his small reptile eyes sparkled still more brightly from their dark orbits, as for a moment he cast a firm look on the witnesses of this scene; then, taking his pen between his teeth, he folded and wafered another sheet, placed it on the table, and then made a sign to Doctor Baleinier, which implied "I am ready."

"You must first take off your flannel waistcoat and shirt, father."

Shame or modesty, Rodin for a moment hesitated — but for a moment only, for when the doctor added, "It must be so, reverend father," Rodin, who was still seated on his bed, obeyed with the help of Doctor Baleinier, who added, no doubt to console the startled pudency of the patient:

"We have absolutely need of all your chest, my dear father, right side and left side."

And Rodin, now stretched on his back, still wearing his greasy black silk cap, exposed the anterior portion of a livid and yellow frame, or rather the bony cage of a skeleton, for the shadows cast by the strong projection of the ribs and cartilages encircled the skin with deep black and circular furrows. As to the arms, they might be compared to bones enveloped with thick cords and covered with shrivelled parchment, so great a relief did the muscular depression give to the bones and veins.

"Now, M. Rousselet, for the apparatus," said Doctor Baleinier.

Then addressing the three congregationists:

"Gentlemen, approach. I have already told you that what you have to do is exceedingly simple, as you will now see."

And M. Baleinier then proceeded to the arrangements requisite.

They were indeed very simple.

The doctor handed to each of his four assistants a sort of small steel tripod, about two inches in diameter, and three in height; the circular centre of this tripod was filled with cotton, as full as possible. This instrument was held in the left hand by a small wooden handle.

In the right hand, each aide-de-camp was armed with a small tin tube, about eighteen inches long. At one end was an opening intended for the lips of the practitioner, whilst the other extremity was bent, and so widened as to serve for a cover to the small tripod.

These preparations were not very alarming, and D'Ai-

grigny and the cardinal, who looked on from some distance, did not comprehend how the operation could be painful.

They soon found it out, however.

Doctor Baleinier, having thus armed his helpers, made them approach Rodin, whose bed had been rolled into the middle of the chamber.

Two of the aides came on one side, two on the other side of the bed.

"Now, gentlemen," said Doctor Baleinier to them, "light the cotton; place the lighted end on the skin of his reverence by means of the tripod, which contains the wick, cover the tripod with the wide end of your tubes, and blow through the mouthpiece in order to keep the fire burning; it is very simple as you see."

It was in truth of patriarchal and primitive invention.

Four wicks of lighted cotton, so disposed as to burn but slowly, were applied right and left to Rodin's chest.

This is commonly called *moxas*. The operation is complete, when the whole thickness of the skin is thus slowly burnt away, which takes from seven to eight minutes. It is declared that an amputation is nothing in comparison.

Rodin had watched the preparations for the operation with undaunted curiosity, but, at the first contact of the four burning brasiers, he curled himself up, and twisted like a serpent, without being able to utter a cry, for he was mute; thus even the expression of his agony was interdicted.

The four assistants, having necessarily deranged their apparatus at the sudden movement of Rodin, had to begin again.

"Courage, my dear father, offer these sufferings to the Lord, — he will accept them," said Doctor Baleinier, in a soothing tone. "I warned you that the operation was a very painful one, but then it is as salutary as it is pain-

ful. Come, you who have evinced so much resolution already must not wince at the decisive moment."

Rodin had closed his eyes, but, overcome by this first surprise of anguish, he looked at the doctor with an air almost ashamed at being so pusillanimous.

Yet right and left, on his breast, were already visible four large scars of blood-red hue, — so fierce and deep had been the burns.

At the moment he was about to reëstablish himself on his bed of suffering, Rodin made a sign, by pointing to the inkstand, that he wished to write.

His whim was of course acceded to. The doctor handed him the blotting-book, and Rodin wrote what follows as if from a sudden recollection:

"No time must be lost, — send instantly and inform Baron Tripeaud of the summons issued against his factotum Leonard, that he may take precautions accordingly."

This note written, the Jesuit handed it to Doctor Baleinier, making him a sign to pass it to D'Aigrigny, who, as much struck as the doctor and the cardinal with such presence of mind in the midst of such acute agonies, remained a moment amazed; Rodin, with his eyes eagerly fixed on the reverend father, seemed to await with impatience until he left the chamber to fulfil his instructions.

The doctor, divining Rodin's thoughts, said a word to D'Aigrigny, who quitted the apartment.

"Come, reverend father," said the doctor to Rodin, "we must begin again, — this time you must not stir, — you know what we have to do."

Rodin made no reply, clasped his two hands over his head, presented his chest and closed his eyes.

It was a strange, revolting, yet almost fantastic sight.

The three priests attired in long black gowns, leaning over this body, almost reduced to a corpse, their lips placed on the tubes which rested on the patient's chest, seemed as though they were pumping up his blood or practising upon him some magic charm.

A nauseous, fetid smell of burning flesh was spreading around the silent chamber, and each assistant heard beneath the reeking tripod a slight crackling, — it was Rodin's skin, which was being penetrated by the action of the fire, and was being cleft in four different places in his breast.

The sweat poured down from his livid features, which shone with it, whilst some pieces of gray, matted, and moist hair clung around his brows. Sometimes such was the violence of the spasms, that the veins of his stiffened arms swelled and expanded like cords about to burst in twain.

Rodin, whilst enduring this frightful torture with as much intrepid resignation as the savage whose glory consists in despising pain, placed all his courage and endurance in his hope — we may say his certainty — of living. Such was the stamp of his indomitable disposition, the omnipotence of his energetic mind, that, in the very midst of his indescribable torments, his fixed idea never forsook him. During the rare intermission which his agony left him, during the inequalities of its intensity, Rodin thought of the Rennepont affair, calculated the chances, combined the most prompt measures, feeling that there was not one moment to be lost.

Doctor Baleinier never removed his eyes from him, but watched him with unabating attention, and the effects of the agony, and the salutary reaction of this agony on the sick man, who seemed indeed to breathe already more freely.

Suddenly Rodin raised his hand to his forehead as if struck by sudden inspiration, turned his head quickly towards M. Baleinier, and begged him by a sign to suspend the operation for a moment.

"I must tell you, reverend father," replied the doctor, "that it is more than half completed, and that, if it is suspended, the renewal will appear even more painful to you."

Rodin made a sign that he was indifferent on that point, and wished to write.

"Gentlemen, cease for a moment," said Doctor Baleinier, "do not remove the *moxas*, but refrain from keeping up the fire."

That was, that the fire was to continue burning gently on the patient's skin instead of consuming it rapidly.

In spite of this pain, less intense, but still keen and severe, Rodin, lying on his back, began to write. In consequence of his posture he was compelled to hold the blotting-book in his left hand, to raise it on a level with his eyes, and write with his right hand, as it were, against the ceiling.

On the first sheet he traced some alphabetical figures in cipher which he had invented for himself alone in order to note down certain secret matters. A few moments previously, in the midst of his tortures, a luminous idea had suddenly occurred to him; he thought it good and noted it down, lest he might forget it in his sufferings, although he had paused two or three times, for although his skin was only burning slowly, still it was burning. Rodin went on to write on another sheet the following words, which on a sign from him were instantly handed to Père d'Aigrigny:

"Send instantly B. to Faringhea, and from him he will receive the report of the events of the last few days respecting Prince Djalma. B. is to return instantly with the particulars."

D'Aigrigny hastened out of the apartment with this fresh order. The cardinal came nearer to the scene of the operation, for, in spite of the noisome smell of the chamber, he felt a satisfaction in seeing the Jesuit half roasted, as he felt towards him all the rancour of an Italian priest.

"Now, reverend father," said the doctor to Rodin, "continue to maintain your fortitude thus admirably,

and your chest will be freed. You have a bitter moment to endure, but then our hopes will be most favourable."

The patient resumed his position; as he did so D'Aigrigny returned. Rodin interrogated him with a look, and the reverend father responded by an affirmative gesture.

At a sign from the doctor, the four assistants applied their lips to the tubes and began to renew the fire with hasty breath.

This renewal of agony was so intense that, in spite of his control over himself, Rodin ground his teeth as if he would break them, gave a convulsive bound, and swelled out so strongly his chest, palpitating beneath the brazier, that, after a violent spasm, there at length escaped from his lungs a shriek of excruciating pain, but yet free, sonorous, resounding.

"The chest is freed!" exclaimed Doctor Baleinier in a tone of triumph. "He is saved, the lungs are at work — the voice comes — the voice has come! Blow away gentlemen, blow away, and you, reverend father," he said, addressing Rodin, joyfully, "bawl out as loud as you can — don't mind, but halloo as lustily as possible. I shall be delighted to hear you, and that will be a comfort for you. Courage, now, I will answer for the result; it is a miraculous cure, and I will publish it, cry it abroad to the sound of the trumpet!"

"Allow me, doctor," said D'Aigrigny, in a low voice, approaching the doctor closely, "monseigneur is witness that I have laid claim in anticipation to the publication of this fact, which will pass, as it really should, for a miracle."

"Well, it is, nevertheless, a miraculous cure," replied Doctor Baleinier, dryly, who was very tenacious of his handiwork.

When Rodin heard him say that he was saved, although his sufferings were, perhaps, even more acute than they had yet been, for the fire had reached the last

layer of the skin, Rodin was really sublime, infernally sublime; through the painful contraction of his features shone the pride of a savage triumph; it was evident that the monster felt himself again strong and powerful, and was fully conscious of the terrible evils which his fatal recovery would create. Thus, whilst writhing beneath the furnace which ate into him, he said, and they were the first words that issued from his chest more and more free and released:

"I — said — that I should — live."

"And you said rightly," cried Baleinier, feeling his pulse, "for now your pulse is full, firm, even, and your lungs free. The reaction is complete, and you are saved."

At this moment the last morsels of cotton had burnt, and they removed the tripods, leaving visible in the bony and fleshless chest of Rodin four large circular scars. The carbonised and still smoking skin exposed the red and live flesh.

In one of the sudden bounds which Rodin had made, he had disturbed one of the tripods, and there was one burn larger than the others, presenting a double black and seared circle.

Rodin looked down upon these wounds, and, after some seconds of silent contemplation, a strange smile rose to his lips, and without changing his position, but looking at D'Aigrigny with a look of intelligence which baffles description, he said to him, slowly counting his wounds one by one with the tip of his finger, with its flat and dirty nail:

"Père d'Aigrigny — what a presage! Only see — one Rennepont — two Renneponts — three Renneponts — four Renneponts," then interrupting himself, where is the fifth? Ah, here — this wound counts for two — it is a twin."[1]

[1] Jacques Rennepont being dead, and Gabriel deprived of any interest by his former deed of gift, there were only now five persons of the family: Djalma, Adrienne, M. Hardy, and Rose and Blanche.

And he gave a little dry and sharp laugh.

Père d'Aigrigny, the cardinal, and Doctor Baleinier alone understood the sense of these mysterious and sinister words, which Rodin then completed by a terrible allusion, exclaiming, in a prophetic voice and with an inspired air:

"Yes, I say it, the race of the impious shall be reduced to dust, as the fragments of my flesh have just been reduced to ashes. I say it — it shall be — as I said I would live, — and — I do live!"

CHAPTER XXIII.

VICE AND VIRTUE.

Two days had passed since Rodin was so miraculously recalled to life. The reader has not perhaps forgotten the house in the Rue Clovis, where the reverend father had an apartment, and where also was the lodging of Philemon, inhabited by Rose-Pompon.

It was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and a bright ray of light, penetrating a round hole made in the door of the half subterraneous shop occupied by Mother Arsène, the fruit and charcoal seller, formed a strong contrast with the darkness of this kind of cavern.

The sun-ray fell directly on an appalling sight. In the midst of fagots and withered vegetables, strewed beside a large heap of charcoal, was a miserable bed, under the blanket of which was easily to be recognised the angular and stiffened form of a corpse. It was that of Mother Arsène, stricken by the cholera, and who had died two evenings before; but the burials being so numerous, her remains had not yet been fetched away.

The Rue Clovis was at this moment almost utterly deserted; a perfect stillness reigned without, interrupted from time to time by the sharp blasts of the northeasterly wind. Between these gusts there was sometimes heard a kind of quick and abrupt noise; this was occasioned by the enormous rats who were scrambling about in the charcoal pile. Suddenly a light noise was heard, and instantly these filthy animals scrambled away, and concealed themselves in their holes.

Some one was trying to force open the door in the alley, which communicated with the shop, and it offered but slight resistance. After a few moments the wretched fastening gave way, and a woman entered, who remained motionless for a minute or two in the midst of the obscurity of the dark and humid cellar. After a moment's hesitation, this female advanced, and the vivid ray of light fell full on the features of the Queen-Bacchanal, who advanced gradually towards the funereal couch.

Since the death of Jacques, the alteration in Céphyse's features had greatly increased. Her pallor was now frightful, her splendid head of hair dishevelled, her legs and feet naked, whilst she was hardly covered by a miserable, patched petticoat, and a tattered neck-handkerchief.

On reaching the bed, the Queen-Bacchanal cast a look of determination, that was almost fierce, on the dead woman's bier. Suddenly she recoiled, uttering a cry of involuntary alarm.

A rapid undulation had moved along and agitated the mortuary cloth from the feet to the head of the deceased; then, the light which ran along the worm-eaten planks of the truckle-bed accounted for the movement of the shroud. Céphyse, reassured, began to look about her, and to collect hastily several things, as if she feared to be detected in this wretched shop. She first took a basket and filled it with charcoal; then, having looked about her, she saw in a corner an earthen brazier, which she seized with a look of sombre satisfaction.

"This is not all — this is not all," said Céphyse, looking around with disquietude.

At this moment she caught sight of a small iron pan, with a tin box beside it containing matches; she put these into the basket, which she took in one hand, and the small brazier in the other. As she stepped by the dead body of the poor charcoal-vender, Céphyse said, with a meaning smile:

"I am robbing you, poor Mother Arsène, but my theft will not be very profitable to me."

Céphyse then left the shop, closed the door after her as well as she was able, went along the alley, and crossed the small courtyard which separated the main building from that in which Rodin had his apartment. Except the windows of Philemon's apartment, from which Rose-Pompon had leaned, and, like a joyous bird, had so often sung her songs of Béranger, the other windows in the house were open. On the first and second floor there were dead persons, which, like so many others, were awaiting the cart in which the coffins were piled up.

The Queen-Bacchanal reached the staircase which led to the rooms formerly occupied by Rodin, and, on reaching the landing, ascended a small, dilapidated staircase as straight as a ladder, to which an old rope served for a balustrade, and then arrived at the half rotten door of the garret.

This house was so dilapidated that in many places the roof was off, and, when it rained, the water came into this dog-hole, which was scarcely ten feet square, and was lighted by a skylight. All the furniture was a wretched, half empty mattress, stretched against the wall on the bare floor, with the straw sticking out of it at all points, beside which was a small, earthen, spoutless pitcher, containing a little water.

La Mayeux, clothed in rags, was seated at the edge of the palliasse, her elbows on her knees, and her face hidden in her lean and white hands. When Céphyse entered, Agricola's adopted sister raised her head, and her pallid but gentle features seemed still more shrunken, still more withered by suffering, woe, and misery; her hollow eyes, red with weeping, were fixed on her sister with an expression of melancholy tenderness.

"Sister, I have brought what we require," said Céphyse, in a gloomy, harsh tone; "in this basket is an end of our wretchedness." Then, showing La Mayeux

the materials she deposited on the floor, she added, "For the first time in my life I have stolen, and that makes me feel ashamed and afraid. Most certainly I was not intended to be either a thief, or something worse; more's the pity!" she added, with a smile of bitterness.

After a moment's silence, La Mayeux said to her sister, with touching expression:

"Céphyse, my dear Céphyse, you are resolved, then, that we should die?"

"Why should we hesitate?" replied Céphyse, with a firm voice. "You see, sister, I have made my calculation; let us look it over once more. If I could forget my shame and the contempt of the dying Jacques, what would then be left for me? Two alternatives: the first, to become good and work; well, you know in spite of my good-will, work will often fail me, as it has failed us for several days past, and, if it should not fail, even then I must live on four or five francs a week. Live! Die, I should say, by inches from privation, as I well know. I would rather die at once! The other choice would be to continue, in order to live, the disgraceful trade which I have once tried, and that I will not; it is too much for me. So really, sister, between frightful misery, infamy, or death, can there be a moment's hesitation? Answer." Then addressing herself without awaiting La Mayeux's reply, Céphyse added, in a gloomy, broken voice, "Besides, what's the use of debating the point? I have made up my mind, and nothing in the world shall divert me from my purpose, and you, my dear, very dear sister, all you could obtain from me was a delay of a few days, in hopes that the cholera would come and spare us the trouble. To please you I have waited. The cholera came, killed all in the house, and left us; so, you see, one must settle one's affairs oneself," she added, with a sarcastic smile. Then she continued, "And besides, even you, my dearest sister, are as anxious as I am to end existence."

"True, Céphyse, dear," replied La Mayeux, who appeared overwhelmed; "but alone one is only responsible for oneself, and it seems to me as though to die with you," and she shuddered as she spoke, "is to be guilty of your death."

"Would you prefer, then, rather to make our arrangements separately, you for yourself, I for myself? That would be a gay affair!" said Céphyse, displaying at this terrible moment that kind of bitter, desperate irony, more frequent than is generally supposed in the midst of such deadly preparations.

"Oh, no, no!" said La Mayeux, with affright; "not alone, oh, I would not die alone!"

"You see, then, my dearest sister, we were right not to forsake each other; and still," added Céphyse, with emotion, "I feel as though my heart was broken when I think you wish to die with me."

"Selfish girl!" said La Mayeux; "what reasons have I, more than yourself, for loving life? What vacancy shall I leave after me?"

"But why you, sister?" replied Céphyse. "You are a martyr; the priests talk of their saints; why, is there one who can equal you? And yet you desire to die like me, — yes, like me, who have always been as idle, as reckless, as culpable, as you have been laborious and devoted to all that were in sorrow or in suffering. Why should I say it? Yet it is true in every way; you, an angel on earth, you are about to die as despairing as myself, — as me who am now as degraded as woman can be," added the unhappy girl, casting down her eyes.

"It is strange," remarked La Mayeux, reflectively; "having started from the same point, we have followed opposite paths, yet we have reached the same termination, — a disgust of life. As for you, my poor sister, but a few days since so lovely, so full of life, so enthusiastic in pleasure and in joy, life is at this moment as burdensome to you as to me, a poor feeble creature.

After all, I have done to the end what was my duty," added La Mayeux, with sweetness. "Agricola no longer wants me — he is married — he loves and is beloved; his happiness is assured. Mlle. de Cardoville has nothing to desire, lovely, rich, happy, I have done for her all that a poor creature of my kind could do. Those who have been kind to me are happy; why, then, should I not to my rest? I am so weary!"

"Poor sister!" said Céphyse, with deep emotion, which expanded her contracted features; "when I think without telling me, and in spite of your resolution never to return to this generous young lady, your protectress, you had the fortitude to drag yourself, dying with weariness and want, to her house, to try and interest her in my fate, — yes, dying, for your strength failed you in the Champs Elysées."

"And when, at length, I was enabled to reach the hôtel of Mlle. de Cardoville, she was unfortunately absent, — oh, most unfortunately!" repeated La Mayeux, contemplating Céphyse with agony; "for the next day, seeing this last resource fail us, thinking, too, more of me than of yourself, and desirous, above all, of getting us bread —"

La Mayeux could not conclude, but hid her face in her hands and shuddered.

"Yes, I sold myself, as so many other wretches sell themselves when work fails or wages are inadequate, and hunger calls so loudly," said Céphyse, in a husky tone; "only instead of living on my shame as so many others live, I shall die of it!"

"Alas! that terrible shame of which you will die, dear Céphyse, because you have still a heart; you would not have known it had I been able to see Mlle. de Cardoville, or if she had replied to the letter which I asked the porter's leave to write to her. Her silence proves to me that she is justly offended at my abrupt departure from her house. I can imagine that she must have attributed

the blackest ingratitude to me; yes, for she must, indeed, be greatly offended not to deign to reply to me, and she has a right to be so. I have not the courage to dare to address her a second time, it would be useless, I am sure. Good and just as she is, her refusals are inexorable when she believes them deserved, and, besides, what is the use? It would be too late, you had resolved on terminating this existence."

"Yes, quite resolved, for my degradation was gnawing into my heart, and Jacques died in my arms despising me — and I loved him!" added Céphyse, with much excitement. "I loved him as we only love once in life!"

"Then let our destiny be accomplished," said La Mayeux, pensively.

"Listen, dear," said Céphyse, after a brief silence, "you never told me the cause of your sudden departure from the house of Mlle. de Cardoville?"

"That is the only secret that will die with me, Céphyse, dear," said La Mayeux, lowering her eyes.

And she thought with bitter joy that she should be soon released from the fear which had poisoned the latter days of her sad existence.

To find herself in the presence of Agricola, and he informed of the deep and absurd love she entertained for him.

For, truth to tell, this fatal, despairing love was one of the causes of the suicide of this unfortunate creature. Since the disappearance of her journal she believed the smith knew the sad secret of those touching pages, and although she never doubted the generosity, the kind heart, of Agricola, she so much mistrusted herself, felt so much ashamed of her love, noble, pure as it was, that in the extremity to which she and Céphyse were reduced, both wanting work and bread, no human power could have forced her to meet Agricola's look, and ask his aid.

No doubt La Mayeux would have taken another view

of her position if her mind had not been troubled with that sort of vertigo with which the strongest minds are sometimes affected, when the misfortunes that beset them pass all bounds; but misery, hunger, and the influence (so contagious in such a moment) of Céphyse's ideas of suicide, the weariness of a life so long devoted to sorrows and mortifications, gave the last blow to La Mayeux's reason; and after having for some time struggled against the fatal intentions of her sister, the poor creature, overcome, prostrated, resolved on sharing Céphyse's fate, seeing at least in death a termination to so much wretchedness.

"What are you thinking of, sister?" asked Céphyse, astonished at La Mayeux's protracted silence.

The latter shuddered, and replied:

"I was thinking of the cause which compelled me to quit Mlle. de Cardoville so suddenly, and must have made me seem so ungrateful in her eyes. May this fatality which drove me from her have produced no victims but ourselves; may devotion like mine, obscure, of little worth as it is, never be wanting to her who extended her noble hand to the poor work-girl, and called her sister; may she be happy, ah, for ever happy!" exclaimed La Mayeux, clasping her hands with the ardour of a sincere invocation.

"Such a wish at such a moment is right, sister," observed Céphyse.

"Oh, Céphyse, dear!" said La Mayeux, emphatically, "I loved — I admired this wonder of mind, heart, and poetic beauty, with deep respect; for never was the omnipotence of God revealed in a work more adorable and pure. One of my last thoughts, at least, will be for her."

"Yes, and thus you will have loved and respected your generous protectress to the last."

"To the last!" said La Mayeux, after a moment's pause. "True, you are right — it is the last. Soon —

in an instant — all will be over! See, how calmly we speak of — of — what so greatly alarms others!"

"Sister, we are calm because we are resolved."

"Quite resolved, Céphyse?" asked La Mayeux, casting once again a searching glance at her sister.

"Oh, yes, would you were as resolved as I am!"

"Be assured if I delayed from day to day the final moment," replied La Mayeux, "it was because I was so desirous of still affording you time for reflection. As for myself —"

La Mayeux did not finish the sentence, but made a sign of despairing sorrow.

"Well, then, sister, let us take one last embrace," said Céphyse, "and then — courage!"

La Mayeux rose from her seat, and flung herself into her sister's arms. They both remained for a long time locked in each other's embrace.

For some minutes there was a profound, a solemn silence, interrupted only by the sobs of the two sisters, for it was only then that they gave way to their tears.

"Oh, to love each other so dearly, and to part, — and that for ever!" said Céphyse; "it is, indeed, cruel!"

"Part!" exclaimed La Mayeux, and her pale and mild features suddenly shone with divine hope, "part, my sister! Oh, no, — oh, no! What makes me calm is that I feel here, in my heart, a deep, a certain longing towards that better world where a better destiny awaits us! God, so great, so merciful, so bountiful, so good, never designed that his creatures should be wretched, but some selfish men, frustrating his design, reduce their fellow men to misery and despair. Let us pity the wicked and leave them, let us go up on high, sister, — men there are nothing, God alone reigns there. Come on high, sister, — there all is good, happy; let us go quickly, for it is late."

So saying, La Mayeux pointed to the red rays of the setting sun, which were visible through the glasses of their window.

Céphyse, excited by the pious enthusiasm of her sister, whose features beamed brightly with the hope of approaching deliverance, and were softly tinted by the parting rays of the sun, Céphyse seized her sister's two hands, and looking at her, deeply affected, cried:

"Sister, how lovely you look thus!"

"My beauty comes a little too late," replied La Mayeux, with a melancholy smile.

"No, sister, for you seem so happy, that the last scruples I had still left for you are now all dissipated."

"Then let us hasten," said La Mayeux, pointing to the brazier.

"Be easy, sister, dear, it will not last long," said Céphyse.

And she then took the brazier filled with charcoal, which she had placed in a corner of the garret, and brought it into the middle of this small apartment.

"Do you know how this should be all managed?" inquired La Mayeux, approaching her.

"Yes, it is very simple," replied Céphyse; "we shut the door, the window, and set light to the charcoal."

"Yes, sister, but I think I have heard say that it was necessary to close up every aperture, that no air might enter."

"You are right, and this door closes so badly."

"And the roof, too, only look at the crevices."

"What is to be done, sister? Now I think of it," said La Mayeux, "the straw of our mattress twisted tightly would serve very well."

"To be sure," replied Céphyse; "we will keep enough to light the fire, and with the remainder we will make bands of straw to stop up the holes in the roof, and the door and window."

Then smiling with the bitter, terrible irony so com-

mon at such moments, as we have already stated, Céphyse added:

"Sister, dear, with our door and window secured against the draughts, how luxurious! We shall be as comfortable as grand people."

"Now, indeed, we may take our ease for a short time," added La Mayeux, imitating the jesting tone of the Queen-Bacchanal.

And the two sisters, with incredible calmness, began to twist the straw into bands, in order to put them between the chinks of the door and the floor, and then they made others still larger to stop up the crevices in the roof.

During this gloomy employment the calm and sad resignation of the two unfortunate girls never forsook them for a moment.

CHAPTER XXIV.

SUICIDE.

Céphyse and La Mayeux calmly continued their preparations for death.

Alas! how many poor young girls, like these poor sisters, have been, and will be still, fatally urged to seek in suicide for a refuge against despair, against infamy, or an existence too wretched to endure!

This must be so — and on society will also weigh the terrible responsibility of these despairing deaths — so long as millions of human creatures, unable to obtain a bodily existence from the contemptible wages given to them, are compelled to choose between these three abysses of ills, shames, and agonies:

A life of enervating labour and murderous privations, the causes of precocious death.

Prostitution, which also kills, but slowly, by contempt, by brutality, and disease.

Suicide, which kills at once.

Céphyse and La Mayeux are morally the symbols of two fractions of the female working classes.

Like La Mayeux, the one portion are discreet, industrious, indefatigable, and struggle energetically, and with admirable constancy, against bad temptations, against the bodily sufferings of a labour beyond their strength, against frightful misery; humble, gentle, resigned, they desire — the good and courageous creatures! — to continue as long as they can endure, although so weak, so

exhausted, so suffering, for they are almost always cold and hungry, and deprived of rest, and air, and sunshine. They persist courageously to the end, until, broken down by excessive labour, undermined by killing poverty, their strength utterly forsakes them, and then almost invariably attacked by the maladies brought on by such utter prostration, the greater portion of them go to breathe out their last exhausted sigh in the hospitals, and supply the dissecting schools — operated upon during their existence, operated upon after their decease — always useful to the living. Poor women! Holy martyrs!

The others, less patient, light a morsel of charcoal, and utterly weary, as La Mayeux said, — yes, utterly weary of this repulsive, gloomy, joyless, hapless life, — they find repose at last, and sleep the last sleep without even bestowing a curse on the world, which has left them no choice but suicide. Yes, the choice of suicide, for, without referring to the occupations whose fatal insalubrity periodically decimates the working classes, misery, like strangulation, kills in a given time.

Other women, on the contrary, endowed like Céphyse, with a quick and ardent organisation, with rich and warm blood, and strong appetites, cannot resign themselves to live only on wages which do not even allow them to satisfy hunger. As to a few amusements, how cheap soever, as to garments, not showy, but clean and neat, wants as imperious as hunger itself with a great many, they must not think of these. What then follows?

A lover presents himself, who talks of fêtes, balls, walks in the fields, to an unhappy girl full of youth and wishes, and nailed to her chair for eighteen hours a day, in some gloomy, close garret; the tempter talks of gay and new apparel, whilst the miserable dress which covers the work-girl scarcely protects her from the cold; the tempter talks of nice dinners, when the bread she eats is not enough to satisfy her appetite of seventeen every

evening. She yields, then, before offers which to her are irresistible.

Then follows the wearying, the forsaking by the lover; but the habit of idleness has possessed her, the fear of misery has increased in proportion as life has become more luxurious; even incessant work will no longer supply all the customary expenditure. Then, from weakness, from fear, from recklessness, they descend one step lower in vice, and again into the deepest abyss of infamy, and thus, as Céphyse said, "Some live in infamy, others die of it."

Do they die, like Céphyse? Then ought they to be more pitied than blamed.

Does not society lose the right of blaming so soon as every human being, at first hard-working and well-disposed, cannot find (we must repeat this again and again), in return for constant toil, a wholesome dwelling-place, warm clothing, adequate sustenance, some days of repose, and all facilities for study and instruction; because the bread of the mind is as due to all as the bread of the body, in exchange for their labour and their honesty?

Yes; selfish and cruel society is responsible for all those vices, all those bad actions, which have had for first cause solely:

The actual impossibility of living without sinking.

We repeat that a fearful number of women have no choice between —

A homicidal misery!

Prostitution!

Suicide!

And this we repeat, and shall be perhaps understood, — and this, because the wages of these unfortunates is insufficient — ridiculous! Not that their employers are generally hard or unjust, but because they are suffering cruelly themselves by the continual reactions of a destructive competition, because borne down underfoot by

an implacable working feudality (a state of things maintained, imposed by the inertness, interest, or bad will of those who govern), they are forced to diminish wages daily to avoid their own utter ruin.

And are not so many unfortunate beings, at least, sometimes supported by a distant hope of a better prospect? Alas, they dare not believe so!

Let us suppose a man sincere, free from asperity, from passion, bitterness, violence, and his heart painfully affected by so much misery, comes and simply places this question before our legislators:

"It results from evident, proved, undeniable facts, that thousands of women are compelled to subsist in Paris on, at the utmost, five francs a week — do you hear? — five francs a week, to lodge, dress, warm, and feed themselves; and many of these women are widows with small children! I will not make what are called fine speeches, I will only conjure you to think of your own daughters, your sisters, your wives, your mothers; like them, however, these thousands of poor creatures, devoted to a frightful and compulsorily demoralising fate, are also mothers, daughters, sisters, wives. I ask you in the name of charity, in the name of good sense, in the name of the interest of one and all, in the name of the dignity of human nature, whether such a state of things, which goes on continually increasing, is tolerable — is possible? Will you suffer it, especially when you think of the frightful evils, the numberless vices, which such misery inevitably engenders?"

What would take place amongst our legislators? Doubtless they would reply, painfully feeling (we must believe) their own inability:

"Alas! it is most distressing, and we groan over such an amount of wretchedness; but we can do nothing!"

We can do nothing!

The moral of all this is very simple, the conclusion easy and manifest to all, especially to those who suffer, and they,

in immense numbers, often draw their own inferences in their own way, and wait.

Perhaps one day society will bitterly regret its own deplorable want of care and attention on this head. Then, the happy of this life will have terrible accounts to demand of those persons who at this time rule over us; for they could, without crisis, without violence, without difficulties, have assured the well-being of the labouring class, and the security of the rich.

Whilst we are awaiting some solution to these questions, so painful and so deeply interesting to the future welfare of society, — of the world, perchance, — many poor creatures, like La Mayeux, like Céphyse, will die of wretchedness and of despair.

The sisters were not many minutes in converting the straw from their bed into the necessary bands and strips for filling up every aperture, and thereby rendering the effect of the charcoal more sure and rapid.

At length the perfect silence which prevailed was broken by La Mayeux, who said to her sister, "You are taller than I am, Céphyse, do you then undertake to close up every crevice in the ceiling, while I attend to the window and door."

"I will, I will," responded Céphyse, in a tone of calm despair, "but my task will be done before yours."

And again a profound silence reigned in the wretched chamber, while the two unfortunate creatures carefully stopped up the various openings by which the wind had hitherto entered this shattered abode.

Céphyse, whose extreme height enabled her easily to reach the roof of their garret, succeeded in filling the minutest crevice with straw, so that not the slightest breath of air could enter to defeat their deadly purpose.

This mournful task accomplished, the sisters sat down beside each other, and tenderly and earnestly regarded one another.

As the fatal moment approached, their countenances exhibited that overexcitement, the invariable accompaniment of double suicides.

"And now," said La Mayeux, "quick — quick, the brazier!" and with these words she kneeled down before the pan filled with charcoal, but Céphyse, taking her by the waist, compelled her to rise, saying:

"Leave me to light the fire, — that is my business."

"Nay, but, Céphyse — "

"Why, you know, sister dear, that the smell of charcoal always gives you a bad headache."

Though the Queen-Bacchanal uttered these words with unaffected earnestness, yet, as the folly of such a recommendation struck the minds of each poor girl, they involuntarily exchanged a mournful smile.

"Well, well," resumed Céphyse, "but for all that, there is no need for your suffering more pain than can be helped, time enough to endure agony when the moment has arrived;" then pointing to the half emptied mattress, Céphyse added, "Go and lie down there, dearest sister, and as soon as I have lighted the brazier, I will come and sit beside you."

"Do not be long, Céphyse."

"Oh, five minutes will do it."

The high part of the building, looking out on the street, was separated by a narrow court from the wing in which was situated the wretched abode of the sisters, and so completely overshadowed it that, when once the sun had sunk behind the sharp gable ends, the garret was almost in a state of darkness, but a faint light stole in through the dingy, opaque windows, sufficient only to reveal the wretched mattress with its checked cover, on which La Mayeux, clad in squalid rags, lay half reclining, leaning on her left elbow, with her chin resting in the palm of her hand, regarding her sister with an expression of heartfelt misery.

Kneeling before the brazier, with her face bent down-

wards towards the charcoal, on whose dark surface flickered a faint and uncertain blue flame, Céphyse was exerting all her strength of lungs to kindle the fire by means of some small pieces of lighted straw, whose deep lurid red reflected an unnatural hue on the pale, sickly cheek of the once blooming Queen-Bacchanal.

The most unbroken silence prevailed, interrupted only by the convulsive and laboured respiration of Céphyse, mingled with the crackling of the now kindled charcoal, which, as it burned brighter and fiercer, emitted a faint and sickening odour.

Perceiving that the brazier was thoroughly lighted, and feeling herself somewhat giddy from its fumes, Céphyse arose, and, approaching her sister, said, in the calm voice of one who has ceased to hope:

"All is now ready!"

"Sister dear," answered La Mayeux, kneeling upon the mattress, as Céphyse stood beside her, "how shall we place ourselves? I could wish us to be together, and as near as possible to each other till all is over."

"Stay!" said Céphyse, progressively executing the various movements she described; "this shall be the way, I will sit at the head of the mattress and lean against the wall, and you, my darling sister, shall lie down there, that's right! Now, lay your head on my lap, and give me your hand! Are you comfortable so?"

"Quite, only I cannot see your face."

"So much the better; for no doubt there will be a time of intense agony, however short it may be, and we could neither of us bear to see the other's sufferings."

"You are right, Céphyse!"

"But let me once again kiss your bright glossy hair," said Céphyse, pressing to her lips the long, silky tresses that shaded the pale, melancholy countenance of La Mayeux, "and then, dear sister, we will not move any more."

"Sister," murmured La Mayeux, "give me your hand for the last time, and afterwards, as you say, we will lie quite still. I do not expect we shall have to wait long, for I begin to feel a sort of drowsiness and faintness stealing over me. Do you experience any similar sensations, dear Céphyse?"

"No!" said Céphyse, "not yet, I only find an oppressive smell from the charcoal."

"You have no idea where we shall be buried, have you, dear sister?" inquired La Mayeux, after a short pause.

"None whatever; but why that question?"

"Only because I should be glad to think it would be in Père la Chaise. I went there once with Agricola and his mother, — oh, what a beautiful place it is! Such trees and flowers, and splendid marble! Do you know, Céphyse, I have often thought, since, that the dead are far better lodged than the living — and — I — I —"

"What ails you, dearest sister?" asked Céphyse, as La Mayeux, whose voice had been gradually becoming fainter and slower, suddenly ceased speaking.

"I know not," replied La Mayeux, "but my temples beat fearfully, and my head seems dizzy, and how do you feel?"

"A little giddy, nothing more; it is strange the symptoms should show themselves so much sooner in you than me."

"Oh," said La Mayeux, trying to smile, "you know, dear Céphyse, I always was so much more forward than my companions in whatever I undertook. Do you remember, even at the school we went to, the holy sisters who taught us invariably pronounced me more precocious than all the other scholars? and, you see, it is still the same thing, I outstrip you even when seeking death."

"Be it so," replied Céphyse, "I shall soon overtake you!"

That which excited the surprise of the sisters was

very easily to be accounted for. Although weakened by grief and misery, the constitution of the Queen-Bacchanal, naturally as strong as that of poor La Mayeux was delicate and feeble, resisted the deleterious effects of the charcoal for a much longer period than her more susceptible sister.

After a short silence, Céphyse, placing her hand on the forehead of her sister, whose head she still supported on her lap, said, tenderly:

"Are you in pain, dear sister? You do not speak to me — tell me, do you suffer much?"

"No, dearest Céphyse," replied La Mayeux, in a faint, languid tone, "but my eyelids seem heavy as lead, and I feel a sort of whirling in my brain; I am conscious, too, that it continues to affect my senses, for my speech seems difficult, and it is with considerable effort I am able to utter these words, except that I do not experience any very great pain. And you, dear sister?"

"While you were speaking, a sudden giddiness came over me, and even now my temples beat as though they would burst."

"Just as mine did a little time ago; one would have thought it was more painful, as well as difficult, to die."

Then suddenly breaking off, La Mayeux remained silent for a short space, when she abruptly said:

"Do you think Agricola will regret me much, and that he will long remember our past friendship?"

"How can you doubt it?" answered Céphyse, reproachfully.

"True," replied La Mayeux, gently; "it was wrong of me to think of such a thing, but if you knew —"

"What, dear sister?"

La Mayeux hesitated for a few seconds, and then with much emotion she said, "Nothing!" Again she returned to the subject by exclaiming, "At least I shall die happy in the knowledge that he has no further need of me; he

is married to a young and charming wife who loves him as tenderly as he loves her, and I feel persuaded she will render his life joyful and contented."

As La Mayeux faltered out these last words, her voice became gradually fainter and fainter, all at once a sort of convulsive spasm seized her, and she cried to Céphyse, in a timid, trembling tone:

"Sister dear, clasp me in your arms; oh — I fear — I know not what — all things appear before my eyes of a dark, gloomy, blue colour, all seems turning around in the room;" and then, as though seeking to escape from the frightful objects which environed her, the unfortunate girl buried her face on the shoulder of her still sitting sister, and feebly folded her in her embrace.

"Courage, dear sister," said Céphyse, tenderly pressing her sister to her bosom, and speaking in a voice visibly becoming weaker and weaker; "courage, all will soon be over." Then, with a mixture of jealous fear, Céphyse added:

"How comes it that my sister sinks so long before myself? She is utterly overcome, while I still retain my senses, and endure scarce any pain, but this neither can or shall continue so. If I thought she would die first, I would go and hold my head over the charcoal-pan, — ay, and I will do so, for fear of the worst — "

But as Céphyse sought to rise, the feeble arms of her sister still restrained her.

"You suffer much, my darling sister, do you not?" asked Céphyse, trembling with affectionate agony.

"Oh, yes, I do now. Oh, Céphyse! — dear Céphyse, stay with me, — do not leave me."

"While I scarcely experience even a passing inconvenience, — nothing that I ought to feel," answered Céphyse, casting a look of almost savage fury at the *réchaud*, "but yet," exclaimed she, with gloomy exultation, "what is this that steals over me, — that seizes on my brain — on my heart? Oh, yes, at length — at length

a sensation as of suffocation oppresses my breath, while my head seems bursting!"

The deleterious gas formed by the burning charcoal had by this time exhausted, by degrees, all the respirable air contained in the closely shut up garret. Day had fully advanced by this time, and the wretched abode of the two sisters, before in almost total darkness, was now lit up by the bright, lurid light of the furnace, which reflected its red and glowing beams upon the pale countenances of the sisters as they lay entwined in each other's arms.

Suddenly, La Mayeux, who had lain perfectly quiet, struggled as though with some powerful emotion; her chest heaved convulsively as she murmured, in a dying tone, "Agricola! Mlle. de Cardoville, — oh, farewell — farewell — Agricola — I —" Then, faintly uttering a few indistinct sounds, her struggles ceased, and her arms, which had almost convulsively enfolded Céphyse, fell listlessly on the mattress.

"Sister, sister!" shrieked Céphyse, raising the head of La Mayeux to ascertain whether, indeed, death had set his seal on those dear features. "What, already freed from suffering? What, gone before me? Oh, no, no, — dead? while I — I —"

The gentle countenance of La Mayeux looked not paler than usual, but in her half closed eyes dwelled only vacancy and unconsciousness, while on the half closed purple lips still played a smile of melancholy sweetness and goodness; a faint sigh escaped her, and then the mouth became fixed and rigid, while the whole features wore the impress of undisturbed serenity.

"This is not right, my sister," exclaimed poor Céphyse, in the most heartrending tones; "you should have waited for me. Sister, — sister, a few minutes and I join you!" cried she, pressing her lips on the already icy cheeks of La Mayeux. "Oh, wait for me, sister, wait but a short space, — I come — I come —."

No sound issued from the pale lips of La Mayeux, and as Céphyse let go her hand, it fell unresistingly back on the mattress.

"God of mercy!" exclaimed Céphyse, springing from the wretched bed in bitter despair, and kneeling in frantic wildness beside the mattress on which La Mayeux lay extended, "Thou knowest 'tis not my fault we have not died together. Dead!" whispered Céphyse, overcome with terror at the sight of her sister's corpselike features. "Dead before me! — probably, because I am the stronger. Oh, blessed change! I, too, begin, like her, to see all things tinged with a blue and livid cast, and I suffer, — oh, God, what thrilling tortures are these that rack my frame! — I choke — I die — oh, air, air — what happiness — what joy! My oppressed heart must soon cease to struggle for breath — for life — I feel the suffocating vapour gain upon me — joy, joy! Sister," cried she, throwing herself beside La Mayeux, and casting her arms about her neck, "reproach me not. I come — I come — I —"

A sudden trampling of feet was heard on the old rickety staircase. Céphyse had still sufficient remaining consciousness to hear and understand the nature of these sounds. Still extended on the body of her sister, she lifted up her head. The noise came nearer and nearer, and soon she heard a voice crying at some little distance from the door, "Merciful powers, what a fearful odour of charcoal!" while directly after the door shook under the violent efforts made to force it open, while a loud, manly voice exclaimed, "Open the door, — open it instantly!"

"Some one comes to save me, while my sister has perished. Oh, no, no; let me not be so base, — so cowardly, as to live since she has died."

Such were the rapid and overwhelming thoughts of Céphyse. Rushing towards the window, she employed all her remaining strength to force it open; the miser-

able frames yielded to her frienzied efforts, and at the very instant when the crazy door gave way beneath the vigorous blows with which it was assailed, the unfortunate girl precipitated herself from the third floor down to the court below.

At this moment Adrienne de Cardoville and Agricola appeared at the entrance to the chamber. Spite of the suffocating atmosphere which filled the room, Mlle. de Cardoville rushed in, and perceiving the brazier, exclaimed:

"Alas, the unhappy girl has destroyed herself!"

"No, no," cried Agricola, "she has thrown herself from the window;" for his eye had caught, at the moment of forcing his way into the miserable spot, the outline of a human form disappearing by the window. "Oh, horrible, horrible indeed!" continued he, as, after a hasty glance around him, he uttered a distracted cry, hid his face with his hands, and, pale and terrified, turned towards Mlle. de Cardoville; but, mistaking the cause of his alarm, Adrienne, who, amidst all the obscurity of the place, had distinguished the form of La Mayeux, replied:

"No, no, there she is!"

At the same time she pointed out to the young smith the pale figure of La Mayeux extended on the mattress, beside which Adrienne threw herself, seizing the icy hands of the young sempstress, and pressing them between her own; then placing a hand on her heart, she found no pulsation, — all was still and at rest; but as the fresh air rushed in from the open door and window, Adrienne, still continuing her anxious scrutiny, imagined that she discovered a slight pulsation, and exclaimed:

"Her heart beats! Oh, M. Agricola, fly quickly for help — for assistance; fortunately, I have my salts with me."

"I will," answered the young smith, dashing down the

dark staircase; "I will obtain help for her, and the other poor unfortunate being also."

He then disappeared, leaving Mlle. de Cardoville kneeling beside the mattress on which lay the cold, pale form of La Mayeux.

CHAPTER XXV.

CONFESSIONS.

DURING the painful scene we have just related, a deep emotion had coloured the features of Mlle. de Cardoville, pale and thin from grief. Her cheeks, formerly so beautifully rounded, were now slightly wrinkled, while a circle of faint and transparent blue was observable around her large black eyes, which were veiled sorrowfully, instead of being brilliant and sparkling, as they were wont to be; her lovely lips, although contracted by painful disquietude, had still preserved their humid and velvety carnation.

In order to bestow her cares on La Mayeux more easily, Adrienne had taken off her hat, and the silky tresses of her beautiful golden hair almost hid her features as she leaned over the mattress by which she was kneeling, clasping in her ivory hands the meagre hands of the poor work-girl, who had been for several minutes completely restored to animation by the wholesome freshness of the air and the potency of the salts which Adrienne carried in a bottle. Fortunately, La Mayeux's fainting had been caused more by her emotion and weakness than by the action of the asphyxia, the deleterious gas of the charcoal not having yet reached its height when the unhappy girl lost her consciousness.

Before we continue the recital of this scene between the work-girl and the patrician lady, some retrospective words are requisite.

Since the singular adventure at the theatre of the

Porte St. Martin, when Djalma, at the peril of his life, had rushed on the black panther before the eyes of Mlle. de Cardoville, the young girl had been variously and deeply affected.

Forgetting alike her jealousy and humiliation at the sight of Djalma thus appearing, in the face of the world, with a female so unworthy of him, Adrienne, for a moment dazzled by the intrepidity of the act, at once so chivalrous and heroic, said, "In spite of odious appearances, Djalma loves me well enough to have braved death for me, that he might pick up my bouquet."

But with this young girl, whose mind was so delicate, and whose disposition and understanding were so generous and just, — her reflection and good sense soon proved the inefficacy of such consolation to cure the deep wounds of love and dignity so sorely assailed.

"How many times," said Adrienne, with much reason, "has the prince faced, in the chase, from pure caprice, and without reason, a danger like that which he has encountered to pick up my bouquet! And, again, who can say that it was not to present it to the female by whom he was accompanied?"

Adrienne's ideas of love, strange, perhaps, to the world, but, nevertheless, just and true, joined to her natural pride, were an insuperable obstacle to her thinking of succeeding to the woman (whoever she might be) whom the prince had publicly displayed as his mistress.

Yet Adrienne scarcely dared own to herself that she felt jealousy, the more painful, the more humiliating, as she felt this female the less worthy of comparison with herself. At other times, on the contrary, in spite of the consciousness she had of her own value, Mlle. de Cardoville, calling to mind the lovely features of Rose-Pompon, asked herself if the bad taste, the vulgar and affected manners of this pretty creature, were the result of precocious and depraved effrontery, or complete ignorance of the usages of society. In the latter case, this very igno-

rance, resulting, perhaps, from a simple and ingenuous nature, might be very attractive; and, moreover, if to this charm and that of incontestable beauty there were united a sincere love and pure mind, the obscure birth and neglected education of this young girl were of very little consequence, and she might inspire Djalma with a very intense passion.

If Adrienne frequently hesitated at deciding (in spite of so many convincing circumstances) that Rose-Pompon was a lost creature, it was her recollecting what so many travellers had related as to the dignity of Djalma's mind; remembering, too, particularly, the conversation she had one day surprised between him and Rodin, she refused to believe that a man endued with a mind so remarkable, a heart so tender, a soul so poetical, so meditative, so enthusiastic as to the ideal, could be capable of loving a depraved and vulgar creature, and of showing himself so unblushingly with her in public; this was a mystery which Adrienne sought vainly to penetrate.

These distressing doubts, this painful curiosity, increased still more the agonised love of Adrienne; and we may judge of her incurable despair when we remember that even Djalma's contempt could not destroy this love, more burning, more impassioned than ever. Sometimes taking up ideas of the fatality of the heart, she said to herself that she was destined to experience this love, that Djalma merited it, and that some day all that was incomprehensible in the prince's conduct would be fully explained to his advantage. Sometimes, on the contrary, ashamed of excusing Djalma, the consciousness of her weakness caused in Adrienne a remorse, a torture incessant; and, a victim to these unheard-of griefs, she lived henceforward in the most profound solitude.

But the cholera now burst out like thunder. Too wretched to fear this scourge, Adrienne was only moved at the sufferings of others. She was one of the first to contribute those large subscriptions which flowed in from

all parts with such admirable display of charity. Florine had been suddenly seized by the epidemic, and, in spite of the danger, her mistress insisted on seeing her and supporting her exhausting courage. Florine, overcome by this new display of goodness, could not longer conceal the treachery in which, until then, she had been an accomplice; and death, before it delivered her from what was unquestionably the odious tyranny of those whose yoke she suffered, allowed her to reveal all to Adrienne. She then learned the incessant espionage of Florine, and the cause of Mayeux's sudden departure.

At these disclosures Adrienne felt all her affection and tender sympathy for the poor work-girl revive. By her order the most active measures were set on foot to discover traces of La Mayeux. Florine's confessions had another important result, also. Adrienne, justly alarmed at this new proof of Rodin's machinations, remembered the projects formed when, believing herself beloved, the instinct of her love revealed to her the perils which Djalma and the other members of the Rennepont family must encounter. Her first thought, then, was to assemble all of her race, — to rally them against the common enemy, after Florine's revelations. This thought she believed it her duty to accomplish, in this struggle against adversaries as dangerous, as powerful, as Rodin, Père d'Aigrigny, the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, and their satellites; for Adrienne saw not only the praiseworthy and perilous task of unmasking hypocrisy and cupidity, but also, if not a consolation, at least a noble amelioration from frightful chagrins.

From this moment, a disturbed, feverish activity usurped the place of the dull and languishing apathy to which she had given way. She summoned around her all the persons of her family capable of answering her appeal, and, as had been detailed in the secret note sent to Père d'Aigrigny, the Hôtel de Cardoville became very soon the focus of active and incessant measures,

the centre of frequent family meetings, in which the means of attack and defence were fully and anxiously discussed.

Quite correct in all its details, the secret note of which we have spoken (and the fact was therein given as dubious) supposed that Mlle. de Cardoville had granted an interview to Djalma. This was false. We shall know hereafter why this suspicion was credited; but, so far from it, Mlle. de Cardoville scarcely found in the occupation of the great interests of her family a passing amusement to the consuming love which was silently undermining her, and with which she reproached herself so bitterly.

The morning of the same day on which Adrienne, learning at length the residence of La Mayeux, had so miraculously snatched her from death, Agricola Baudoin had called at the Hôtel de Cardoville to report respecting M. François Hardy, and had requested permission to accompany her to the Rue Clovis, whither they both went in great haste.

Then, again, we have this noble spectacle, this touching symbol, Mlle. de Cardoville and La Mayeux, the two extremes of the social chain, touching and meeting in soft and sympathising equality, for the work-girl and the patrician lady were alike worthy in intellect, in soul, and in heart; and they were the more worthy, as the one was the ideal of wealth, grace, and beauty, whilst the other was the ideal of resignation and unmerited suffering. Alas! misfortune suffers with courage and dignity, why should it not also have its crown of glory?

La Mayeux, extended on her mattress, appeared so weak that, even if Agricola had not been detained on the ground floor of the house beside Céphyse, then expiring of a horrid death, Mlle. de Cardoville would still have had to wait some time before she could beg La Mayeux to rise and go down with her into her carriage.

Thanks to the presence of mind and the pious fraud of

Adrienne, the poor girl was persuaded that Céphyse had been transported to a hospital close at hand, where the necessary cures were administered to her, and which, it was hoped, would be successful. La Mayeux's faculties only wakened very gradually from their bewilderment, and she had thus believed this without the slightest suspicion, being also ignorant that Agricola had accompanied Mlle. de Cardoville.

"It is to you, mademoiselle, that Céphyse and I owe our lives," said La Mayeux, turning her wan and melancholy face towards Adrienne. "To you, kneeling in this garret, by the bed of misery, where my sister and myself desired to die; for Céphyse — you assure me, do you not, mademoiselle? — has been, like myself, succoured in time?"

"Yes, take comfort, for this moment they have been to tell me that she was recovering her senses."

"And she has been told I was living, has she not, mademoiselle? If not, perhaps she will regret having survived me."

"Be tranquil, my dear girl," said Adrienne, pressing La Mayeux's hands between her own, and fixing on her eyes moistened with tears; "they have told her all that was requisite. Do not disturb yourself; only think of returning to life, and, I hope, to happiness, of which hitherto you have known so little, my poor dear!"

"How good you are, mademoiselle! After my flight from your house, when you must have thought me so ungrateful!"

"Presently, when you are not so weak, I will tell you many things which would now fatigue your attention too much, perhaps. But how do you find yourself?"

"Better, mademoiselle — the fresh air, and the thought that, as you are now here, my poor sister will be no longer reduced to despair; for I, too, will tell you all, and I am sure you will have pity on Céphyse, will you not, mademoiselle?"

"Rely on me in every way, my dear," replied Adrienne, concealing her painful embarrassment. "You know I take an interest in you and all that concerns you. But tell me," added Mlle. de Cardoville, in an agitated voice, "before you took this desperate resolution, you had written to me, had you not?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Alas," replied Adrienne, sorrowfully, "not receiving any answer from me, you must have thought me forgetful, and cruelly ungrateful!"

"Oh, I never accused you, mademoiselle; my poor sister will tell you so. I have been grateful to you to the last."

"I believe you,—I know your heart; but then how could you explain my silence?"

"I believed you were justly offended at my sudden departure, mademoiselle."

"I offended! Alas, I never received your letter!"

"And yet you knew that I wrote to you, mademoiselle?"

"Yes, my poor dear girl, I knew you had written to me through the porter; unfortunately, he gave your letter to one of my women, named Florine, telling her that the letter came from you."

"Mlle. Florine! The young person who was so kind to me?"

"Florine behaved most treacherously to me; she was sold to my enemies, and acted as a spy over me."

"She!" exclaimed La Mayeux. "Is it possible?"

"Yes," replied Adrienne, bitterly; "but she was, after all, as much to be pitied as blamed; she was compelled to obey a terrible necessity, and her confession and repentance before death obtained my pardon."

"She dead, too,—she, so young, so handsome!"

"In spite of her wrongs towards me, her end deeply affected me, for she confessed her crimes with distressing regrets. Amongst other disclosures, she told me she had intercepted a letter in which you had requested an interview which might save your sister's life."

"That was true, mademoiselle — such were the contents of my letter; but what interest could any one have in keeping it from you?"

"They feared seeing you return to me, my good guardian angel; you loved me too well; my enemies feared your faithful affection, so wonderfully served by the instinct of your heart. Ah, I shall never forget how deserved was the horror with which you were inspired against a wretch whom I defended against your suspicions."

"Monsieur Rodin?" said La Mayeux, shuddering.

"Yes," replied Adrienne; "but do not let us talk of such creatures now. These hateful remembrances will spoil the joy I experience in seeing you recover, for your voice is not so weak, and your cheeks are slightly coloured, thank God! I am so delighted at finding you again! If you only knew all I hope, all I expect from our meeting again! for we will never part again, will we? Oh, promise me that, in the name of our friendship!"

"I, mademoiselle, your friend!" said La Mayeux, lowering her eyes, timidly.

"Did I not, some days before your departure from my house, call you my friend — my sister? What change is there now? None — none," added Mlle. de Cardoville, with deep emotion. "I should say, on the contrary, that a fatal similarity in our mutual positions makes your friendship more dear, still more precious; and it is mine, is it not? Oh, do not refuse me, I am in such want of a friend!"

"You, mademoiselle! What need can you have of the friendship of a poor creature like myself?"

"Yes," replied Adrienne, looking at La Mayeux with an expression of keenest grief; "and more — you are the only person to whom I could, to whom I should, dare to confide my very bitter griefs." And Mlle. de Cardoville's cheeks turned very red.

"And how have I merited such a mark of confidence, mademoiselle?" inquired La Mayeux, more and more surprised.

"The delicacy of your heart, the firmness of your mind," replied Adrienne, after a slight hesitation; "then you are a woman, and I am sure you will comprehend better than any one what I suffer, and you will pity me."

"Pity you, mademoiselle!" said La Mayeux, whose astonishment increased; "I pity you — a great lady, so envied and admired! I, so humble and so insignificant, pity you!"

"Oh, my dear friend," replied Adrienne, after some moments' silence, "are not the most poignant griefs those which we dare not avow to any one, because of our fear of raillery or contempt? How can we dare ask pity or interest for sufferings which we dare not avow to ourselves, because we should blush in our own eyes?"

La Mayeux could scarcely believe what she heard. If her benefactress, like herself, had experienced an unhappy affection, she would have spoken thus; but the sempstress could not believe in such a supposition; and thus, attributing to another cause the griefs of Adrienne, she replied, sorrowfully, whilst thinking of her fatal love for Agricola:

"Oh, yes, mademoiselle, a grief that makes us feel ashamed — that must be terrible, very terrible!"

"But then what joy to meet not only with a heart noble enough to inspire you with perfect confidence, but also proved by a thousand griefs to be capable of offering you pity, support, counsel. Tell me, my dear girl," added Mlle. de Cardoville, looking fixedly at La Mayeux, "if you were overwhelmed with a suffering that made you blush, would you not be happy, very happy to find a soul kindred, sister with your own, into which you could pour out your troubles, and half alleviate them by a full and merited confidence?"

For the first time in her life, La Mayeux contemplated Mlle. de Cardoville with a sentiment of sorrow and distrust. The last words of the young lady seemed to her very significant. "No doubt she has my secret," said La Mayeux to herself; "no doubt my journal has fallen into her hands; she knows my love for Agricola, or she suspects it. What she has just said was to excite my confidence, and assure her whether or not she has been well informed."

These thoughts did not excite in La Mayeux any bitter or ungrateful feeling against her benefactress; but the heart of the unfortunate girl was of such refined sensibility, of such painful susceptibility, with respect to her unhappy love, that, despite her deep and most tender affection for Mlle. de Cardoville, she suffered bitterly in believing her mistress of her secret.

The thought (at first so painful) of Mlle. de Cardoville being aware of her love for Agricola was soon changed by the pure and estimable qualities of La Mayeux's noble mind into a deep and touching regret expressive of her warm attachment and veneration for Adrienne.

"Perhaps," said La Mayeux, mentally, "conquered by the influence of that extreme goodness exercised towards me by my beloved protectress, I should have confessed to her a secret I thought but a little while since to have carried with me to my grave; it would have been at least a proof of my gratitude towards Mlle. de Cardoville, but I am now unfortunately deprived of the mournful satisfaction of confiding to my benefactress the only secret of my life. And then, again, however great her pity for me, however compassionate her nature, how is it possible one so lovely, so beloved as herself, could ever comprehend the painful condition of an unhappy being, like myself, constrained to bury, in the most hidden recess of my aching heart, a love as hopeless as ridiculous on my part? Oh, no, no; spite of the delicacy with which I feel assured she would kindly comfort me, my gentle

benefactress would unconsciously wound me still deeper; it is only the miserable can effectually administer consolation to those similarly afflicted. Alas! alas! why has she not left me to die?"

These reflections passed through the mind of La Mayeux with the rapidity of thought. Adrienne, who was closely observing her, remarked that her features, which were gradually recovering their usually mild and serene aspect, all at once underwent a complete change, as though under the influence of some painful, humiliating sentiment. Alarmed at this gloomy relapse, the consequences of which might be fatal to La Mayeux, still extremely faint and weak, and, in a manner, on the verge of the grave, Mlle. de Cardoville said, quickly:

"Do you not agree with me, my dear friend, that the most cruel sorrow, the most mortifying circumstance, may be mitigated and soothed if poured into the pitying breast of a faithful and devoted companion?"

"Doubtless, mademoiselle," answered La Mayeux, bitterly; "but those who suffer in silence can alone judge of the right moment for unburdening their woes and revealing their secret; until voluntarily given, it would be kinder to respect this silence, and not endeavour to force a confidence, or from any motives whatever to surprise it."

"You are quite right, my poor girl," said Adrienne, mournfully; "and, if I have chosen the present almost solemn moment to repose in you a most painful secret, it is because I feel assured that, when you have heard my words, you will attach so much the greater value to your existence, as it will be manifest to you how greatly I stand in need of your tenderness, your consolations, and your pity."

At these words, La Mayeux made an effort to raise herself, and, half reclining on her wretched mattress, she gazed on Mlle. de Cardoville with mute astonishment. Could she hear aright? Instead of seeking to

draw her own secret from her, or surprise her into a confession of her absurd passion for Agricola, her protectress assured her, with lips that never uttered aught but truth, that she it was who came to ask sympathy, to seek consolation, and to solicit the — pity! — of a wretched outcast — a despised Mayeux!

"Do I hear aright?" she at length managed to stammer forth. "'Tis you, mademoiselle, who come —"

"To tell you I suffer, while I blush with deep shame, for the very torments which consume me; yes," continued the agitated girl, with an expression of almost convulsive agony, "of all humiliating confessions, I come to breathe into your ear the most so, — I love, yet despise myself for my misplaced affection."

"Like me!" exclaimed La Mayeux, involuntarily, as she clasped her hands with energetic pressure.

"Yes," resumed Adrienne, with a burst of long-repressed grief, "I love, and my passion is unrequited and impossible. It consumes — destroys me — and yet I dare not confide this fatal secret to any."

"Like me!" again repeated La Mayeux, quite unconsciously, and gazing with fixed attention. "She, peerless by beauty, as well as exalted by rank, so rich, so talented, courted, and admired, suffers then like a poor wretch such as myself!" murmured she, "and no more dare breathe her unhappy tale than do I, a miserable outcast."

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, impetuously, "like you, my excellent friend, I love, without hope of return. Was I wrong, then, in saying that to you alone I could unburden my heart, when, having endured the same sufferings, you alone could pity what I undergo?"

"You know all, then, mademoiselle?" whispered La Mayeux, casting down her eyes, and recovering from the first surprise into which this conversation had thrown her.

"I do, my poor girl; but never would you have heard

the smallest reference to your secret from me, if I myself had not had one far more painful to confide to you; yours is cruel, mine humiliating. Thus you see," said Mlle. de Cardoville, speaking in a tone and voice of such anguish as is impossible to describe, "how misfortune breaks down and lessens what are called distinctions and distances. Alas! how frequently do the great and the envied in this world fall by severe visitations of Providence below the condition of the most humble and wretched, nay, till they come even to crave the consolation of those who but lately believed them favoured above all mortals." Then, drying the tears which had flowed abundantly, Mlle. de Cardoville said, in an agitated manner:

"But never mind, sister in misfortune, let us take courage to bear our fate; let us love, support, and console each other, and make this sad and mysterious bond a tie which shall for ever unite us."

"Ah, mademoiselle, forgive me; but, now you know the secret of my life," said La Mayeux, lowering her eyes and unable to disguise her confusion, "I do not seem able to look at you without feeling ashamed."

"And wherefore? because you are passionately attached to M. Agricola?" inquired Adrienne. "Why, then, I ought also to die with shame in your presence, for, less courageous than you, I have not had the strength of mind to resign myself to conceal my love in the deepest recesses of my heart. He whom I love with a love never to be surpassed has known my love, and has scorned it, has preferred to me a woman, the selection of whom is a fresh and mortal insult to me, if appearances do not belie her. Sometimes I hope they do deceive me; tell me, then, is it you who ought to lower your eyes?"

"You disdained for a female unworthy to be compared to you? Ah, mademoiselle, I cannot believe it," exclaimed La Mayeux.

"And at times I myself can scarcely believe it, and I say that without pride, but because I know the value of my own heart. Then I say to myself, 'No,' she whom he prefers is, no doubt, capable of touching the very soul, mind, and heart of him who disclaims me for her.'"

"Ah, mademoiselle, if all I hear is not a dream, if false appearances do not lead you astray, your grief is great indeed."

"Yes, my poor friend, great, oh, how great! and yet now, thanks to you, I have the hope that, perhaps, this fatal passion will grow weaker, perhaps I shall find strength to overcome it, for when you know all, absolutely all, I would not blush in your eyes, you the noblest, worthiest of women, you whose courage and resignation are, and always will be, an example for me."

"Ah, mademoiselle, do not speak to me of my courage when I have so much cause to blush at my weakness."

"Blush, alas! always this fear? Is there, on the contrary, anything more touching, more heroically devoted, than your love? You blush! And wherefore? Is it for having displayed the most holy affection for the loyal artisan, whom from your infancy you have learned to love? Blush, for having been the most tender daughter to his mother? Blush, for having endured without complaint, poor dear girl! a thousand sufferings, all the more poignant as the persons who forced you to endure them had not any consciousness of the ill they did you? Did they think they wounded you, when, instead of giving you your simple name of Madeleine, as you said, they always used without reflection a nickname so ridiculing and painful? And yet, for this, how many secret humiliations and agonies did you undergo!"

"Alas! mademoiselle, who could have told you?"

"Did you not confide this to your journal? Well, I must tell you all. Florine, on her death-bed, confessed all her misdeeds. She had had the baseness to steal

your — compelled, be it added, to this odious act by the persons who controlled her. But she had read this journal, and, as every good feeling was not utterly dead in her, the perusal of that portion in which you expressed your admirable resignation, your sad, but holy love, had so deep an effect on her that even at her dying hour she quoted several passages to me, as she accounted to me for your sudden disappearance, for she had no doubt but that you were impelled to your flight by the fear of your love for M. Agricola being known."

"Alas! that is but too true, mademoiselle."

"Oh, yes," continued Adrienne, with bitterness, "those who worked upon the unhappy girl knew well how to direct the blow, — they are no novices in directing injuries. They reduced you to despair, — they killed you. But, then, why were you so devoted to me? Why did you penetrate their mask? Ah, those black gowns are implacable, and their power is great," said Adrienne, with a shudder.

"It is fearful, mademoiselle."

"Take courage, my dear little child, as you see the weapons of the wicked often turn against themselves, for, at the moment when I learned the cause of your flight, you became only more endeared to me. From that time I made every possible effort to find you, and at length this morning only, after great search, the person whom I had charged with the task of discovering your retreat learned that you were inhabiting this house. M. Agricola happened to be at my house, and begged to be allowed to accompany me."

"Agricola!" exclaimed La Mayeux, clasping her hands, "is he come?"

"Yes, my dear; but compose yourself. Whilst I was doing all I could to revive you, he was occupied with your poor sister; you will see him presently."

"Alas, mademoiselle," replied La Mayeux, in alarm, "he doubtless knows —"

"Your love? No, no; be assured, and only think of the happiness of meeting again with this good and loyal brother."

"Ah, mademoiselle, let him never know what has caused me so much shame that I would have died,—praised be God, he knows nothing!"

"No, and therefore no more sad thoughts, my dearest girl; think of this beloved brother, that you may say to yourself that he arrived in time to spare us eternal regrets, and you a great fault. Ah, I do not speak to you of the prejudices of the world as to the right which the creature has to restore to God a life which has become too heavy. I only say to you that you ought not to die, because those whom you love, and who love you, still want you."

"I believed you were happy, mademoiselle; Agricola was married to the young girl he loved, and who will, I am certain, ensure his happiness. How could I be useful?"

"To me, as I have proved to you; and who could say that M. Agricola would never have need of you? Who told you that his happiness or that of his family would always last, or would not be liable to severe trials? And, even if those who love you were to be always happy, could their happiness be complete without you? And your death, with which, perhaps, they would have reproached themselves, might not this have entailed upon them endless regrets?"

"True, mademoiselle," replied La Mayeux; "I have been wrong, a fit of despair seized on me, and then the most appalling misery had overwhelmed us; we had been for several days unable to find work; we were living on the charity of a poor woman, who has been carried off by the cholera; to-morrow or next day we must have died of hunger."

"Died of hunger when you knew my house?"

"I had written to you, mademoiselle, and, receiving

no reply, I believed you irrevocably offended at my sudden departure."

"Poor dear child! You were, as you say, under the influence of a fit of despair at this fearful moment, and I have not courage to reproach you for having, for a moment only, doubted me. How can I blame you? Have I not myself entertained the idea of putting an end to myself?"

"You, mademoiselle!" exclaimed La Mayeux.

"Yes, I had thought deeply about it, and at that moment they came to tell me that Florine was in her last agony and desired to speak to me. I went to her, and heard her disclosures. They suddenly changed my intentions. This dull, gloomy life, which had become insupportable to me, was suddenly lighted up, a consciousness of duty was awakened within me. You, no doubt, were a prey to the most horrible misery, it was my duty to seek you out, to save you. Florine's confessions disclosed to me the new scheme of the enemies of my isolated family, dispersed by bitter sorrows, by cruel losses. It was my duty to warn them of the dangers of which they were most probably ignorant, and to rally them against our common enemy. I had been the victim of odious intrigues, and it was my duty to contend against the plotters, for fear lest, encouraged by impunity, these black gowns might make fresh victims. Then the sense of duty gave me fresh strength, and I was enabled to throw off my stupor, and, aided by the Abbé Gabriel, that sublime priest, — ah, how sublime! The ideal of a true Christian, the worthy adopted brother of M. Agricola, — I courageously entered on the struggle. What shall I tell you, my child? The accomplishment of these duties, the incessant hope of finding you again, have already soothed my sufferings. If I have not been consoled, I have at least been distracted from them. Your kind friendship, and the example of your resignation, will do all the rest, and I believe, I am sure, I shall forget this fatal love."

As Adrienne uttered these words, quick steps were heard ascending the staircase, and a young and joyous voice was heard saying:

"Oh, poor dear Mayeux! I only hope I am not too late! Dear, dear, I shall be so delighted if there is anything I can do to help her."

And, without waiting to knock at the door, Rose-Pompon rushed unceremoniously into the garret, followed by Agricola, who, directing Adrienne's attention to the open window, endeavoured by signs to make her understand she must not speak to the grisette of the deplorable death of the Queen-Bacchanal. All this dumb show was, however, lost upon Mlle. de Cardoville, whose heart beat with mingled pain, indignation, and pride, as she recognised in the fresh arrival the young female she had seen with Djalma at the Porte St. Martin, and who had been the sole cause of all the wretchedness she had experienced since that fatal night.

And yet, by a cruel stroke of destiny, it was at the very instant when the wounded heart of Adrienne was about to breathe forth the humiliating confession of her despised love that the woman for whom she believed herself sacrificed again stood before her.

If the surprise of Madame de Cardoville was great, that of Rose-Pompon was noways inferior. Not only did she easily discover in Adrienne the lovely individual with the rich golden hair who had occupied the opposite box to herself on the night of the incident of Djalma's attacking the black panther, but she had most urgent and important reasons for ardently desiring this unexpected and improbable meeting. No words can, therefore, adequately paint the look of malignant and triumphant joy with which she affected to survey Adrienne. The first impulse of Mlle. de Cardoville was to quit the garret; but not only would it have pained her to abandon La Mayeux at this critical juncture, but also did she shrink from assigning a reason in Agricola's

presence for this abrupt departure. And, further still, an inexplicable and fatal curiosity seemed to retain her on the spot, even in despite of her outraged feelings, and so she stayed.

"She should now," she mentally argued, "be enabled to judge of this rival, to whom her happiness had been sacrificed; face to face, she should see and hear each look and word that escaped the being who had all but cost her her life, and to whom, in her jealous agonies, she had attributed every perfection of body and mind, the better to account for the conduct of Djalma towards herself."

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE RIVALS.

Rose-Pompon, whose appearance excited so much emotion in the mind of Mlle. de Cardoville, was dressed in the most coquettish and tawdry manner.

Her *bibi* (head-dress) of pink satin, with a very small crown, was placed so forward and so *à la chien* that it came almost over the end of her small nose, and in revenge disclosed the half of her silky and light chestnut hair; her plaid gown of enormous checks was open in front, and her transparent tucker, which was not closed over carefully, displayed profusely her well-rounded charms, whose effect was not diminished by the widely sloped opening of her corsage.

The grisette, having hurried up the staircase, held in each hand the corners of her shawl, bedecked with large, blue flowers, which, having slipped from her shoulders, had fallen on to her wasp-like waist, where it was compelled to take rest by a natural obstacle.

If we enter into these details, it is because, at the sight of this pretty creature, attired in a manner so unbecoming and flaunting, Mlle. de Cardoville, at once detecting her as the rival she believed so happy, felt her indignation, vexation, and shame redoubled.

We may judge of Adrienne's surprise and confusion when Mlle. Rose-Pompon said to her, with a self-possessed and unceremonious air:

"Ah, I am so glad to find you here, madame; we can

now have some talk together, only I wish first to embrace my poor dear Mayeux, with your leave, madame."

To imagine the tone and accent with which the word madame was uttered, we must have been present at discussions more or less stormy between two jealous and rival Rose-Pompons, and then we might comprehend all that this word madame, uttered under important circumstances, would comprise, all that was provoking and hostile.

Mlle. de Cardoville, overcome by the impudence of Mlle. Rose-Pompon, remained silent, whilst Agricola, whose attention was solely occupied in attending to La Mayeux, who had not taken her eyes off him since he entered the room, as well as by his recollection of the afflicting sight he had just witnessed, said in a low voice to Adrienne, without remarking the grisette's impertinence:

"Alas, mademoiselle, it is all over. Céphyse has just breathed her last sigh, without being for a moment restored to consciousness."

"Wretched girl!" said Adrienne, with emotion, and forgetting Rose-Pompon for a moment.

"We must conceal this sad news from La Mayeux, and tell her hereafter with great caution," added Agricola; "fortunately, little Rose-Pompon knows nothing about it."

And by his look he directed Mlle. de Cardoville's attention to the grisette, who had crouched down close to La Mayeux.

When she heard Agricola treat Rose-Pompon so familiarly, Adrienne's amazement redoubled; it is impossible to describe what she suffered, for, strange to say, she seemed to herself to suffer less, and her anguish diminished in proportion as she heard the terms in which the grisette expressed herself.

"Ah, my dear, good Mayeux!" she exclaimed, with equal volubility and emotion, and her pretty blue eyes

filled with tears, "is it possible you could have done anything so foolish? Is it that amongst poor people they do not assist each other? You couldn't send to me, then, though you know what is mine belongs to my friends; I would have made a raffle of Philemon's whole bazar," added the strange girl, with an increase of tenderness, which was at the same time sincere, affecting, and comical. "I would have sold his three boots, his dearly beloved pipes, his aquatic costume, his bed, and even his out-and-out tumbler, that you might not have been reduced to such a miserable plight. Philemon would not have been angry, for he is a trump of a fellow; and, if he had kicked up a row, it would have been all the same, — thank God we are not married; I only say that you ought to have thought of poor little Rose-Pompon."

"I know how kind and obliging you are, mademoiselle," answered La Mayeux; for her sister had told her that Rose-Pompon, like many in her condition, had a generous heart.

"I suppose," continued the grisette, wiping away a tear from the end of her little red nose with the back of her hand, "you will tell me next that you did not know where I had pitched my tent lately. Such a funny story! — when I say funny I mean quite the contrary;" and Rose-Pompon heaved a heavy sigh. "But that's all one," she continued; "there's no occasion to talk about that. It's evident you are better now, and neither you nor Céphyse must ever think of doing such a thing again. They tell me she is very weak, and no one must see her. Isn't it so, M. Agricola?"

"Yes," said the smith, with some embarrassment; for La Mayeux never took her eyes off him; "we must have patience."

"But I shall see her to-day — shall I not, Agricola?" inquired La Mayeux.

"We will see about it; but pray calm yourself."

"Agricola is right, and we must be patient, my dear Mayeux," replied Rose-Pompon. "We will wait, I will wait also; and, in the meantime, should like a talk with madame (and Rose-Pompon gave Adrienne a look like an angry cat). Yes, yes, I will wait, for I wish to tell poor dear Céphyse that she, as well as yourself, may rely on me," and Rose-Pompon drew herself up consequentially; "make your minds easy. To be sure, when one is in a comfortable way, one should let one's friends who are not happy share in one's luck. I have no idea of any one keeping their good fortune all to themselves. That's my idea. Show it at once, and take care of your luck; put it in a glass case, that nobody may take it away, I say. Though, to be sure, when I say my good fortune, it's a figure of speech! It's true, in one sense — quite true; but in another — you see, my good Mayeux — why, that's another thing. But, bah! after all, I am only seventeen. It's all one, I hold my tongue; for, if I were to talk to you till tomorrow in this way, you would not know more about it. So, once again, let me give you a hearty kiss, and don't be vexed any more, nor Céphyse either — I tell you; for here I am now —"

And Rose-Pompon, crouching on her heels, kissed La Mayeux heartily.

It is impossible to describe Mlle. de Cardoville's sensations during this conversation, or rather monologue of the grisette, in reference to the attempt of La Mayeux at suicide. The eccentric jargon of Mlle. Rose-Pompon, her liberal allusions to Philemon's bazar, to whom, as she said, she was fortunately not married; the kind-heartedness that displayed itself every now and then in her offers of service to La Mayeux; these contrasts, impertinencies, drolleries, were all so strange and incomprehensible to Mlle. de Cardoville, that she at first remained mute and motionless from surprise.

Such, then, was the creature for whom Djalma had sacrificed her!

If Adrienne's first sensation at the sight of Rose-Pompon had been acutely painful, reflection soon awakened in her doubts, which speedily became unutterable hopes. Recollecting, again, the conversation she had overheard between Rodin and Djalma, when, concealed in the conservatory, she had gone to assure herself of the Jesuit's fidelity, Adrienne no longer asked herself if it were possible and reasonable to believe that the prince, whose ideas in love appeared so poetical, so elevated, so pure, could find the least attraction in the silly babble, the bald, disjointed chatter of this young girl. Adrienne this time no longer hesitated, but with reason considered the thing impossible, when she saw her singular rival close, and heard her express herself in such vulgar language, ideas, and remarks, which, without injuring the effect of her pretty features, gave them a character so trifling and unattractive.

Adrienne's doubts on the subject of the deep love of the prince for a Rose-Pompon were now changed into complete incredulity. Endued with too much sense, too much penetration, not to feel that this apparent liaison, so inconceivable on the part of the prince, concealed some mystery, Mlle. de Cardoville felt hope renewed within her.

In proportion as this consoling idea obtained possession of Adrienne's mind, her heart, until then so painfully oppressed, dilated; vague aspirations of a happy future came over her; and though cruelly warned by the past, and afraid of yielding to a too facile illusion, she recalled the fact, unhappily attested to, of the prince displaying himself in public with this young girl; yet, from the very reason of her becoming more familiar with the peculiar features of her character, did the prince's conduct appear more and more incomprehensible. How could she judge really and surely of that

which was enveloped in mystery? And then again she reassured herself, for she felt a secret presentiment it would be, perhaps, at the bedside of the poor work-girl whom she had snatched from death, that by a providential interposition she would have a disclosure on which depended the happiness of her life.

The emotion with which Adrienne's heart was excited became so lively that her beautiful countenance became rose-colour, her bosom heaved violently, and her large black eyes, until then so downcast, sparkled with softness and brilliancy, and she became intensely impatient. In the conversation with which Rose-Pompon had threatened her, — a conversation which, a few seconds before, Adrienne would have repulsed with the hauteur of her proud and legitimate indignation, — she now hoped to find the explanation of a mystery which it was so important for her to penetrate.

Rose-Pompon, after having once again tenderly embraced La Mayeux, arose, and, turning towards Adrienne, whom she measured with an air of insolence, said, in an impertinent tone:

"Now, for us two, madame (the word madame being pronounced as before), we have something to know the rights of between us."

"I am at your service, mademoiselle," replied Adrienne, with much sweetness and simplicity of manner.

At the sight of the coquetting and pert mien of Rose-Pompon, and hearing her flippancy to Mlle. de Cardoville, the excellent Agricola, after some tender words exchanged with La Mayeux, opened his ears as wide as possible, and was, for a moment, confounded at the effrontery of the grisette; then going towards her, and touching her by the sleeve, he said, in a whisper:

"I say, are you out of your senses? Do you know to whom you are speaking?"

"Suppose I do, what then? Is not one pretty woman as good as another? I say this for madame. No one

will eat one, I suppose," replied Rose-Pompon, insolently. "I have to speak to madame, and she knows very well why and what about; if not, I'll tell her; it won't be a very long job."

Adrienne, fearful that some ridiculous explosion with reference to Djalma might take place in Agricola's presence, made a sign to him, and said to the grisette:

"I am prepared to listen to you, mademoiselle, but not here, — you understand why."

"Oh, yes, madame; I have my key, so, if you like, come along to my room."

This "my room" was said with an air of great consequence.

"Let us then go to your room, mademoiselle, since you will honour me by receiving me there," replied Mlle. de Cardoville, in her softest and most liquid tone, and bending slightly, with an air of politeness so exquisite that Rose-Pompon, in spite of her effrontery, was exceedingly abashed.

"What, mademoiselle," said Agricola to Adrienne, "you are really so kind as —"

"M. Agricola," replied Adrienne, stopping him, "be so kind as to remain here with my poor friend. I shall soon return."

Then going towards La Mayeux, who participated in Agricola's astonishment, she said to her:

"Excuse me if I leave you for a few instants. Try and gather a little strength, and I will come back for you to take you home, my dear and good sister."

Then turning towards Rose-Pompon, who was more and more surprised at hearing this fine lady call La Mayeux her sister, she said to her:

"When you please, mademoiselle, we will go down."

"Pardon me, excuse me, madame, if I go first to show you the way; but this barrack is such a break-neck place," said Rose-Pompon, squeezing her elbows against her hips, and pursing up her lips, in order to

prove that she was, by no means, ignorant of good manners and fine language.

The two rivals left the garret in which Agricola and La Mayeux remained alone.

Fortunately the mangled remains of the Queen-Bacchanal had been conveyed into the subterranean shop of Mother Arsène; and thus the gazers always attracted by melancholy events were congregated at the door of the house, and Rose-Pompon, not meeting any one in the little court which she crossed with Adrienne, continued still in ignorance of the tragic death of Céphyse, her former friend.

After a few moments the grisette and Mlle. de Cardoville found themselves in Philemon's apartment.

This singular abode had remained in the picturesque disorder in which Rose-Pompon had left it, when Nini-Moulin came to seek her to be the heroine of a mysterious adventure.

Adrienne, completely ignorant of the eccentric manners of the students, male and female, could not, despite her preoccupation, prevent herself from examining, with great astonishment, this whimsical and grotesque chaos of most contrasted objects, — costumes for masked balls, death's heads, smoking pipes, boots mingled with books, monster glasses, women's clothes, fancy pipes, etc.

To Adrienne's astonishment a painful repugnance succeeded.

The young lady felt ill at ease, out of place, in this refuge, not of poverty, but disorder, whilst the miserable attic of La Mayeux had not caused her any such repulsion.

Rose-Pompon, in spite of her deliberate impertinence, experienced considerable emotion when she found herself tête-à-tête with Mlle. de Cardoville. In the first place, the uncommon beauty of the young patrician, her lofty air, the extreme distinction of her manners, the way, at once high bred, yet affable, with which she had responded to the pert assumption of the grisette, began

to have their effect on the latter; and the more so, as she was, after all, a well-meaning creature, and had been much moved at hearing Mlle. de Cardoville call La Mayeux her sister, — her friend.

Rose-Pompon, without knowing anything particularly of Adrienne, was not ignorant that she belonged to the richest and highest class of society, and she thus felt some remorse for having acted so cavalierly; and thus her intention, at first very hostile towards Mlle. de Cardoville, gradually modified.

However, Mlle. Rose-Pompon was a very self-willed young lady; and, desirous not to appear to be subdued by an influence at which her *amour propre* revolted, she tried to resume her assurance, and, after having bolted the door, she said to Adrienne:

"Take the trouble to sit down; will you, madame?" still anxious to show that she was not ignorant of fine language.

Mlle. de Cardoville took a chair mechanically, whilst Rose-Pompon, anxious to practise that ancient hospitality which respected even an enemy as a sacred guest, exclaimed, quickly:

"Not that one, madame; one of the feet is off."

Adrienne placed her hand on another chair.

"Nor that either, the back has given way," again shrieked Rose-Pompon. And she said rightly, for the back of this seat (it represented a lyre) remained in the hand of Mlle. de Cardoville, who replaced it cautiously in the seat, saying:

"Perhaps, mademoiselle, we can converse as well standing."

"As you please, madame," replied Rose-Pompon, who took up an attitude which she meant to be dignified and consequential, whilst she really felt her importance very fast diminishing.

And thus began the conversation between Mlle. de Cardoville and the grisette.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE CONVERSATION.

After a minute's hesitation, Rose-Pompon said to Adrienne, whose heart was palpitating violently:

"I will tell you, madame, without disguise, what I have on my mind. I should not certainly have tried to see you, but as I find you, why, it is very natural that I should try and profit by the circumstance."

"But, mademoiselle," said Adrienne, quietly, "may I at least know the subject of the conversation we are about to have together?"

"Yes, madame," replied Rose-Pompon, with increased assurance, which was, however, more affected than real; "in the first place, there's no reason why I should be thought uncomfortable, or that I have any desire to get up a scene of jealousy, or utter shrieks of distress. Do not flatter yourself as to that, I beg. *Dieu merci!* I have no reason to complain of Prince Charming (for that's the name I've given the dear fellow); on the contrary, he has made me very happy, and if I have left him, it was against his wishes decidedly, and only because I chose it myself."

And as she said this, Rose-Pompon, who, in spite of her off-hand airs, had a very heavy heart, heaved a deep sigh.

"Yes, madame," she continued, "I have left him because it pleased me, for he was foolishly in love with me, and, if I had at all wished it, would have married me, — yes, married me, madame, — so much the worse, if

what I say annoys you; I mean, when I say so much the worse, I really mean that I should not be sorry to have made you rather uncomfortable, so you may believe me. But when I saw you just now so kind to poor dear Mayeux, although I feel I have acted like a woman, yet I feel something; but then, to be frank with you, I really must say I hate you, and you deserve it!" added Rose-Pompon, stamping her foot.

From all this, it was evident, even to a person much less penetrating than Adrienne, and less anxious to arrive at the truth, that Mlle. Rose-Pompon, in spite of her triumphant airs with reference to him who was so madly in love with her, and would have married her, — it was evident that Mlle. Rose-Pompon was completely disappointed, that she was telling an enormous falsehood, that he did not care about her, and that violent love and spite had made her desirous of meeting Mlle. de Cardoville, in order to avenge herself by getting up what is vulgarly called a scene, as she considered (we shall learn why presently) Adrienne as her fortunate rival. But Rose-Pompon's kind heart having obtained the ascendency, she found herself unwilling to produce the scene. inasmuch as Adrienne, for the reasons already given, obtained more and more influence over her.

Although she had fully anticipated, if not the singular attack of the grisette, still this result, viz., that it was impossible that the prince could have any serious attachment for this young girl, yet Mlle. de Cardoville, in spite of the singularity of the rencontre, was greatly gratified at seeing her rival thus confirm a part of her conjectures. But then to these hopes, almost realised, there suddenly succeeded a cruel apprehension. Let us explain.

What Adrienne had just learned ought to have completely satisfied her, according to what is called the usages and customs of the world, that Djalma's heart had never ceased to be hers. It mattered little that the prince, in all the effervescence of an ardent youth, had or had not

yielded to an ephemeral caprice for this young creature, who was really very pretty and very tempting; for, even supposing he had yielded to this caprice, he had blushed for his error, and separated from Rose-Pompon.

In spite of so many good reasons for this error of the senses, Adrienne could never have pardoned it. She never could comprehend this absolute separation of body and soul, which maintains that the one does not participate in the stain of the other. She could not believe that it was possible to give oneself up to one woman whilst thinking of another. Her love, young, chaste, and impassioned, was absolute in its exaction, — an exaction as just, in the eyes of nature and of God, as ridiculous and silly in the eyes of men.

Adrienne had, on the subject of the senses, scruples, delicacies unheard of, invincible repugnances completely unknown to those austere spiritualists, those ascetic prudes, who, under the pretext of the vileness, the unworthiness of the offence, look on these errors as absolutely immaterial and unworthy of consideration, that they may vent all their spite and malice on the female offender.

Mlle. de Cardoville was not one of those fiercely bashful creatures who would rather die with confusion than declare openly their desire to be married to a young, handsome, and pure-minded husband, and who thus, as a consequence, wed ugly, worn out, dissipated men, — quite sure six months afterwards to have two or three lovers. No; Adrienne felt instinctively all the heavenly and virginal freshness there is in the equal innocence of two handsome beings, enamoured and impassioned, — all that there is to guarantee the future in the tender and inexpressible souvenirs which a man preserves of his first love, which is also his first possession.

We have said that Adrienne was thus but half reassured, although perfectly convinced, from Rose-Pompon's tone of chagrin, that Djalma had never felt the least serious attachment towards the grisette.

Rose-Pompon had terminated her harangue by this phrase of flagrant and significant hostility:

"Madame, I really hate you!"

"And why do you hate me, mademoiselle?" inquired Adrienne, mildly:

"Oh, dear madame," replied Rose-Pompon, entirely forgetting her character of a conquering queen, and giving way to her natural disposition, "as if you didn't know why, and for what, I hate you. Do people go and pick up other people's nosegays out of the very jaws of black panthers for other people for whom they don't care a button? And, then too, as if that were all," added Rose-Pompon, who became gradually animated, and whose pretty face, until then contracted by an assumed angry pout, was, as she spoke, expressive of real vexation, that was very comical, — "ah, if it were merely the affair of the bouquet," continued she, "although my heart seemed turned upside down, when I saw my 'Prince Charming' spring on the stage, I should have said, 'Oh, these Indians have their own particular notions of being polite and attentive; here, for instance, if a lady drops her nosegay, a well-behaved gentleman picks it up, and, making a low bow, returns it to its owner; but it is quite different in India; there a man does not restore what he has picked up till he has killed a lion, or a tiger, or some savage beast, before her eyes, — that, it seems, is the tip-top compliment of the country.' But what I consider a very bad compliment is, to treat a woman as I have been treated, and all on your account, as I know full well, madame."

These complaints on the part of Rose-Pompon, at once whimsical and bitter, by no means agreed with what she had previously asserted touching Djalma's ardent and extravagant love for herself. Adrienne, however, wisely forbore to remind her of these contradictions, and contented herself with mildly observing:

"You are under some mistake in supposing I have

been in any way concerned in causing your vexations. Still, I can assure you I truly regret that you have been unkindly treated by any one."

"Oh, bless us!" cried Rose-Pompon, "if you think I have been beaten, or anything of that sort, you're just mistaken. No, I should rather think not, indeed — that isn't it; still I know very well that, if it had not been for you, Prince Charming would at last have loved me, if ever so little; and certainly I must say, he might have done worse things than that, too. And, besides, there are so many ways of loving, and I, who am not at all difficult or hard to please, would have been glad of ever such a trifle in the way of affection, that I should — but no, I never got so much from him as this," continued Rose-Pompon, pettishly biting the end of her rosy thumb-nail.

"I'm sure," cried she, "when Nini-Moulin came here to fetch me, and brought me such a lot of jewels and fine things to induce me to go away with him, he was right enough to say I was not running into any danger, and that nothing was required of me but what was perfectly correct."

"Nini-Moulin?" repeated Mlle. de Cardoville, becoming more and more interested; "and who, pray, may Nini-Moulin be?"

"Oh, he's a religious writer," replied Rose-Pompon, in a half pouting, half sulky voice, "a sort of handy jack, belonging to a pack of sinful old sacristans, whose money he pouches, and gives them in return anything they want in defence of morality and religion. All I can tell you more is, that his own morality is of a very funny sort."

At the words, "religious writer for the sacristans," Adrienne discovered the clue to another infamous project on the part of Rodin or Father d'Aigrigny, in addition to the black scheme which had already well-nigh proved fatal to the peace and welfare of herself and

Djalma, and a faint, confused notion of the true state of the case glanced across her mind. Still, she composed her features and her voice sufficiently to ask in a calm, tranquil manner, "But what motive could this man have had in persuading you to leave your home and accompany him?"

"I don't know anything about his motives. When he came for me, he said my virtue would be quite safe, and that all I should be required to do would be to make myself look as charming as I could, and to call up all my prettiest and most winning ways. Well, thinks I, Philemon is away, and I find it very dull here alone; there seems something mighty droll in this affair, and I run no risk either. Ah," sighed Rose-Pompon, "I little thought the danger I was running into. Well, Nini-Moulin took me in a fine carriage, which stopped in the Place du Palais Royal. A queer looking man, with a skin the colour of an orange, took Nini-Moulin's place in the carriage, and conducted me to the house of Prince Charming, where I took up my abode. When I first saw the dear prince I quite staggered back with surprise and admiration at his beauty, for he was a beauty if ever there was one, and then he looked so good, so kind. Oh, dear! thinks I to myself, it will be rather hard work to be so 'very correct,' as Nini-Moulin talked of, with such a love of a companion as this; but I had no need to be afraid. Heaven knows I remained prudent and correct enough, rather more so than I could see the necessity of."

"But surely you cannot regret having preserved your virtue so immaculate?"

"I tell you what I regret, and that is, never having once had the opportunity or satisfaction of refusing the very smallest request. How is one to say 'No,' if one is never asked to say 'Yes;' if you are never solicited to grant the very, very least favour, that is? And what can be more insulting to a young and pretty woman than

never once to utter a single word that sounded like love."

"Still you must pardon me for remarking that the indifference manifested towards you does not appear, in my opinion, to have prevented your making a somewhat long stay in the house of which you are speaking."

"How do I know why Prince Charming chose to keep me there, or why he thought proper to take me about with him in a carriage, or to the theatres? How can I tell you what his reasons were? Perhaps in the savage country he comes from, it is the fashion to keep a nice pretty girl always beside the grandees, just to accustom them not to pay any sort of regard to such a circumstance."

"But why did you stay in the house? You were not compelled to do so."

"Why?" exclaimed Rose-Pompon, impatiently stamping her foot, "why, I stayed because, somehow or other, I found myself, against my will, over head and ears in love with this dear prince; and the oddest thing is, that I who have always been gay as a lark actually loved him for his very sadness and melancholy, a sure proof how much I was in earnest; however, one day I could hold out no longer. Well, said I, come what may, I care not, —I can bear this no longer. I have no doubt but Philemon has played me many a sly trick in the country, so that is an excuse for my forgetting him while he is away; so accordingly I set to work, and dressed myself. Oh, so sweetly, so becomingly (you can judge by my present appearance what taste I have)! And after having looked at myself in the glass, 'Oh,' said I, 'this must win his heart — he never can resist!' So off I went straight to the prince, and then I lost my senses, I think, for I positively told him all the tender thoughts he had inspired me with. I laughed, I cried, until I finished by declaring that I perfectly adored him, and that I would kill myself if he did not return my love! And what do you

think he answered in his usual sweet, calm voice, while he himself was cold and motionless as marble, 'Why, poor girl!' Poor girl, indeed!" repeated Rose-Pompon, indignantly. "Why, he could not have said either much more or less had I gone to complain to him of the toothache, in consequence of cutting a wisdom tooth; and what aggravates me worse than all is, that I am sure and certain, if he were not himself crossed in love, he would be like a train of gunpowder. Yet there he is, as dull and miserable as can be!"

Then, suddenly checking herself in something she was about to say, Rose-Pompon continued, "No, no, now I think of it, I will not tell you that,—it would please you too much;" and then, after a second pause, the capricious and whimsical creature, fixing her large blue eyes with a mingled expression of respect and deep emotion on Mlle. de Cardoville, said: "Well, la! why shouldn't I tell you? Oh, I don't care about its pleasing you; I must tell the truth, and I will. What is the use of my trying to conceal anything from you? Why, a little while ago, when I was showing off my airs and consequence, I began by telling you that Prince Charming wished to marry me, and afterwards I let out, in spite of myself, that he had all but turned me out of the house. I don't know how it is, but whenever I tell fibs I always make such a mess of it that I am glad to go back to truth again to put me straight. So now, madame, you shall really and truly have the true history of the affair. When first I saw you with poor La Mayeux, I bristled up my feathers with rage, and felt as angry as a turkey-cock; but when I heard a beautiful rich lady like you call that poor miserable girl your sister, and speak to her so kindly and tenderly, it was no use trying to feel in a passion; while I looked at and listened to you, my anger had all melted away. Well, then again, after we came here, I did all in my power to work myself up into a rage, but it was no use. The more I perceived the

difference between you and myself, the more I comprehended how natural it was for Prince Charming to prefer you to me; for there's no mincing the matter that he's downright crazy about you. I only wish I could have got him to care a hundred-thousandth-part as much about me; but no, it was no use trying and trying, he never seemed to know or to heed anything I said or did. I don't mean because of his killing that tiger at the Porte St. Martin, just because he took the liberty of smelling at your bouquet; but, bless me, you would never guess the antics he played with the bouquet itself after he got it home; then he used to pass whole nights without sleeping, and very often weeping, in a salon where, I am told, he saw you for the first time. You know a room that opens into a conservatory, and there he has painted your portrait, from memory, on the glass doors, as is the custom in his country, and a quantity of other lover-like tricks I can't bear to think of, but which nearly drove me wild, for I did love him so very much. Yet, at last, I began to feel grieved and sorry for him; his misery quite touched me, and, instead of feeling angry and offended, I pitied him for suffering as I suffered. Ah, I only wish it had depended on me to make him happy; he should not have been sighing and gazing on that faded nosegay as he did, till it made the tears come in my eyes to see his handsome face look so melancholy! I declare even now, only with thinking of the poor dear prince, I can hardly help crying. Ah, madame," added Rose-Pompon, her pretty blue eyes filled with tears, and with so genuine a look of sympathy that Adrienne was deeply touched by it, — "ah, madame, you who look so good and gentle, do not leave the poor prince to be for ever wretched, but try and love him a little — pray do; oh, you will find it very easy as well as agreeable — if you only try."

And, as though to add further strength to her petition, Rose-Pompon, with a movement which, savouring too

much of familiarity, was nevertheless performed with unfeigned simplicity, eagerly seized the hand of Mlle. de Cardoville.

That young lady had need of all the self-command she possessed to restrain the torrent of joy which rose from her heart to her lips, to arrest the torrent of inquiries she longed to address to Rose-Pompon, as well as to restrain her own tears of joy and delight which had long trembled on her silky lashes; and yet, strange to say, when Rose-Pompon took her hand, instead of angrily withdrawing it, Adrienne affectionately pressed that of the grisette, then involuntarily drew her towards the window, as though she were desirous of more attentively examining the lovely countenance of Rose-Pompon.

The grisette, on entering the chamber, had thrown her shawl and head-dress on the bed, so that Adrienne could freely admire the thick, rich masses of light, glossy hair which shaded her blooming features and set off the dazzling brilliancy of her complexion, displaying to advantage the round, pearly cheek, and pouting lips that rivalled coral, with which the clear blue of her laughing eyes formed so gay a contrast. Neither could Adrienne avoid perceiving, owing to the very *dégagée* style of Rose-Pompon's toilet, that the beauty of her throat and bosom fully equalled the charms of her face, while the eye glancing downwards, the finely rounded waist found all admirable and perfect. Strange as it may appear, Adrienne was delighted to find this young girl still more handsome than she had at first thought her. Djalma's stoical indifference for such an attractive creature said enough for the sincerity of the love which absorbed him.

Rose-Pompon, after having taken Adrienne's hand, was as confused as surprised at the kindness with which Mlle. de Cardoville received her familiarity. Emboldened by this indulgence and the silence of Adrienne, who for

some instants looked at her with almost grateful benevolence, the grisette replied:

"Yes, madame, you will take compassion on the poor prince, won't you?"

We cannot take upon ourselves to say what answer Adrienne was about to make to this indiscreet question on the part of Rose-Pompon, when, suddenly, a sort of wild, shrill, shrieking, ear-piercing sound, which was evidently meant for an imitation of a cock crowing, was heard outside the door.

Adrienne started with alarm, but in a moment Rose-Pompon's countenance, which had been so touchingly expressive, expanded joyously as, recognising the signal, she exclaimed, clasping her hands:

"'Tis Philemon!"

"What! Philemon?" said Adrienne, quickly.

"Yes, — my lover. Ah, the monster, he creeps quietly up the stairs to play the cock. It's so like him!"

A second "cock-a-doodle-doo," still more vociferous, was heard outside the door.

"Bless me, what a funny, foolish fellow it is! He always does the same thing because he knows how much it always amuses me," said Rose-Pompon.

And she wiped away her latest tears with the back of her hand, laughing like an idiot at Philemon's pleasantry, which always seemed new and pleasant to her, although she was so regularly used to it.

"Do not open the door," said Adrienne, in a low tone, more and more embarrassed, "do not answer, I entreat you."

"The key is in the door, and the bolt is fastened; Philemon knows very well there is some one here."

"Never mind."

"But, to tell truth, he is at home here, madame, — we are in his apartments."

And Philemon, probably growing weary at the ineffectual result of his ornithological imitations, turned the

key in the lock, but, unable to enter, said through the door, in a deep bass voice:

"Halloo, ducky dear of my heart, what, are we shut in? Are we praying to St. Flare-up for the return of Mon-mon (read Philemon)?"

Adrienne, unwilling to increase the embarrassment and absurdity of this situation by protracting it, went to the door and opened it to the astonished gaze of Philemon, who retreated two or three steps.

Mlle. de Cardoville, in spite of her extreme annoyance, could not repress a smile at the sight of Rose-Pompon's lover, and the packages he had in his hand and under his arm.

Philemon was a tall fellow, brown and fresh-coloured. He wore a white, flat cap, whilst his black and tufty beard fell in masses on a large sky-blue waistcoat *à la Robespierre*, a short frock coat of olive velveteen, and very wide plaid trousers of immensely large pattern completed Philemon's costume. As to the luggage which had caused Adrienne's smile, it consisted in, first, a portmanteau from which projected the head and feet of a goose, and which he carried under his arm; secondly, of an enormous white live rabbit, enclosed in a cage which the student held in his hand.

"Ah, what a love of a white rabbit! What dear beautiful red eyes he has!"

It must be confessed that these were the first words of Rose-Pompon, and they were not addressed to Philemon, although he had returned after a long absence; but the student, far from being annoyed at seeing himself completely sacrificed to his long-eared, ruby-eyed companion, smiled complacently, as if delighted to see the surprise he had prepared for his mistress so completely successful.

This passed very rapidly.

Whilst Rose-Pompon, kneeling before the cage, was uttering her great admiration of the rabbit, Philemon,

struck at the aristocratic bearing of Mlle. de Cardoville, had put his hand to his cap, and respectfully saluted her as he moved along the room.

Adrienne returned his salute with mingled politeness and dignity, and, going down the stairs, quickly disappeared.

Philemon, as much dazzled by her beauty as struck with her noble and patrician mien, was very curious to know how the devil Rose-Pompon had such acquaintances, and said to her, in his amorous and tender slang:

"Duck of my heart, tell its Mon-mon (Philemon) who that fine woman is?"

"One of my school-fellows, great satyr," said Rose-Pompon, playing with the rabbit.

Then glancing at a box which Philemon had placed near the cage and portmanteau:

"I'll bet that that's some more plums you've brought from home."

"Mon-mon brings better than that to his dear pussy," said the student, imprinting two vigorous kisses on the fair cheeks of Rose-Pompon, who had got off her knees, "Mon-mon brings her his heart."

"Gammon!" said the grisette, placing delicately the thumb of her left hand to the extremity of her little pink nose, and opening her small hand, which she gently moved.

Philemon replied to this little impertinence of Rose-Pompon by putting his arm around her waist, and the happy household then closed the door.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CONSOLATIONS.

During the conversation of Adrienne and Rose-Pompon, a touching scene was passing between Agricola and La Mayeux, who were both greatly surprised at Mlle. de Cardoville's condescension to the grisette.

Immediately after the departure of Adrienne, Agricola went on his knees by Mayeux's couch, and said to her, with deep emotion:

"We are alone, and I can now tell you what I have on my heart. Ah, what you have done is very frightful — die of misery — despair, and not send for me to come to you!"

"Hear me, Agricola."

"No, there is no excuse for it. Of what use has it been, then, that we should be called brother and sister; to have given each other for fifteen years proofs of the most sincere affection, and yet on a day of misfortune you thus resolve on quitting life without any disquietude as to those you leave behind you; without reflecting that to kill yourself is to say to them, 'You are nothing to me?'"

"Forgive me, Agricola, this is too true; I did not think of that," said La Mayeux, lowering her eyes, "but misery — the want of work!"

"Misery — the want of work! But was not I at hand?"

"Despair."

"And why despair? The generous young lady received you at her house; appreciating your worth she treated you like a friend, and yet it was at the moment when you had every guarantee for future happiness, my poor dear, that you so suddenly abandoned the house of Mlle. de Cardoville, leaving us all in horrible anxiety as to your fate."

"I — I was afraid — of being a charge — incumbrance — to my benefactress," stammered out La Mayeux.

"You a charge — incumbrance — to Mlle. de Cardoville, who is so rich and good?"

"I was afraid I might commit some indiscretion," answered the poor little Mayeux, more and more embarrassed.

Instead of replying to his adopted sister, Agricola kept silence, gazed at her for several moments with an indefinable expression, and then suddenly exclaimed, as if in reply to a question he had put to himself:

"She will forgive me for having disobeyed her; yes, I am sure of it."

Then addressing La Mayeux, who looked at him with increasing surprise, he said to her in a broken and agitated voice:

"I am too frank; the position is not tenable; I am reproaching, blaming you, and I am not thinking of what I say, but thinking of something else."

"Of what, Agricola?"

"I am wounded to the heart when I reflect on all the ills I have done you."

"I do not understand you; you never did me any ill."

"No, really? Never? Not even in small things? When, for instance, giving way to a detestable habit of infancy, I who loved you, respected you as my sister, I insulted you a hundred times a day!"

"Insulted me?"

"And what else was it when I invariably gave you a

nickname so full of hateful ridicule, instead of calling you by your name?"

At these words La Mayeux looked at the smith with affright, trembling lest he should be informed of her sad secret, in spite of the assurance to the contrary which Mlle. de Cardoville had given her. Still she calmed herself by the thought that Agricola might have been reflecting on the humiliation she must have felt on hearing herself perpetually, invariably called La Mayeux (Humpback). She replied, with a forced smile:

"Why vex yourself for such a trifle? It was as you say, Agricola, a habit of infancy. Your good and tender mother, who treated me as her daughter, also called me Mayeux, as you very well know."

"And was it my mother who went to consult you as to my marriage, to talk to you of the uncommon beauty of my betrothed, to entreat you to see this young girl, to study her disposition, in the hope that the instinct of your attachment for me would inform you of everything, — even if I should have made a bad choice? Was it my mother who displayed this cruelty? No, it was I myself who thus rent your heart in twain."

La Mayeux's fears again awoke; there was no longer any doubt; Agricola possessed her secret. She felt as if she should die with confusion. Still, making one last effort not to believe in this discovery, she murmured, in a faint tone:

"In truth, Agricola, it was not your mother who urged you to that, it was yourself; and — and — I — I felt grateful to you for such a proof of confidence."

"Grateful to me, poor, dear, distressed child," cried the smith, his eyes filled with tears, "no, that is not true, for I did you a terrible injury; I was pitiless without knowing it."

"But," said La Mayeux, in a voice scarcely intelligible, "why do you think of this?"

"Why?" exclaimed the smith, in a voice tremulous

from deep emotion, and affectionately bestowing on La Mayeux a fraternal embrace. "Why? Because you loved me!"

"Great God!" murmured the unhappy girl, striving to cover her face with her thin hands; "he knows all!"

"Yes," cried the smith, with an expression of respectful tenderness impossible to depict, "yes, I do know all, and I positively forbid your blushing for a sentiment so honourable as well as flattering to my feelings. Yes, I know all, and I say with pride and happiness that the best and noblest heart that ever beat in human breast was, is, and ever shall be mine. Come, come, Madeleine, let us leave shame to those who nourish sinful or ignoble passions, but do you fearlessly look up; raise your eyes, and carefully search my features, you know that they have never expressed any but my real thoughts, and that falsehood or feigned meaning never yet was impressed on them. Well, then, I bid you look. Ay, look well on the face of your brother, and then I am sure, Madeleine, you will read how proud, how justly proud, I feel of your love."

Overcome with grief, and bowed by shame, La Mayeux had not once dared raise her eyes towards Agricola, but the words of the smith were uttered with so much earnestness, his voice trembled with so true a manly tenderness, that by degrees the poor creature felt her confusion disappear, even in spite of herself; especially when Agricola, with increasing warmth, added:

"Tranquillise yourself, then, my gentle, noble-minded sister. I promise you, you shall never have cause to regret the affection so generously bestowed; but that it shall be the study of my life to render myself worthy of it, and trust me it will henceforward be a source of as much happiness to you as it has hitherto been of sorrow and tears. For why should a love like yours produce coldness, confusion, or fear? Love in a breast pure as that of my Madeleine is made up of devotion, tenderness,

and esteem, returned even with tenfold strength, accompanied by a confidence that knows no bounds; and these feelings will, for the future, be stronger than ever with both of us! Upon a thousand occasions formerly I inspired you with fear and mistrust; but for the time to come, when you perceive me all joy, and finding myself the possessor of such a heart as yours, dear Madeleine, you will rejoice and feel glad at having occasioned me so much happiness. I know it sounds selfish to urge such reasons; but you know I cannot utter other sentiments than those I feel."

The more the smith spoke, the more emboldened grew La Mayeux. What she had most dreaded in the betrayal of her secret was to have seen it received with contempt or raillery, or, at most, by a mortifying and humiliating pity; but, on the contrary, joy and happiness were visible on the fine, manly countenance of Agricola, whom La Mayeux well knew to be incapable of feigning. Discarding, therefore, all false shame and confusion, she also exclaimed, in exulting tones:

"So it is with all right and unselfish feelings! They ever finish by exciting interest and sympathy for those who have endeavoured to control their passions and submit themselves to the will of God, — a passion, pure and sincere, is capable of bestowing equal honour on the object that inspires it as the heart that cherishes it. Thanks to you, Agricola, and your kind assurances, I feel that, instead of blushing for my love, as though it were base or unworthy, I may even glorify myself for it. You and my benefactress are quite right, wherefore should I feel shame? Is not my affection pure and holy as that of angels? What did I ever aspire to more than being constantly near you, to love you, and dare to tell you so; to prove my affection by every action of my life? And yet, shame, dread, with the distractions caused by the climax of misery I endured, drove me to the very verge of suicide; but then, dear friend and

brother, I must crave some allowances and indulgence for the weakness of an unfortunate being, devoted, like myself, to ridicule and scorn, even from my cradle; and then, too, this secret would have died with me, had not a chance, impossible to foresee, have revealed it to you. You are right in saying I ought not to have doubted you, more than I did myself; I should have fearlessly trusted to your generous nature, to conceal my weakness and forgive my folly, but you must make allowances for me. When we mistrust ourselves as cruelly as I did, it unfortunately leads us to suspect and undervalue others, but let us forget all that. Come, Agricola, my kind and beloved brother, let me repeat the words you yourself used but just now. Look well into my face; you know my features are incapable of expressing falsehood; look closely, then, upon me, — see if my eyes fear to meet yours, tell me if you have ever seen my countenance beam with truer delight, and yet a short time since I was about to die."

La Mayeux said truly. Even Agricola himself had not hoped for so prompt an effect from his words. Spite of the severe traces left by grief, want, and sickness on the features of the poor girl, there shone, at this moment, a happiness refined and serene; while her soft blue eyes, pure and gentle as her mind, were raised without embarrassment to meet the gaze of Agricola.

"Oh, thanks, thanks, dearest Madeleine!" cried the delighted young man; "when I see you so calm and restored to peace, I feel more grateful to you than I can describe."

"Yes," replied La Mayeux, "I am calm and happy; and henceforward you will never see me otherwise, for now I shall have nothing to conceal, my every thought will be known to you. Oh, this day, which began so threateningly, will end like a heavenly dream; far from beholding you with fear, I gaze on you with delightful hope. I have again found my generous benefactress.

I have no further uneasiness on my sister's account. We shall shortly see Céphyse, shall we not? For my joy seems incomplete till she partakes of it!"

La Mayeux looked so radiant with happiness that the smith could not find in his heart to disturb it by revealing to her the wretched death of her sister, which he purposed breaking to her cautiously and by degrees.

"Céphyse," replied the smith, "being of a more robust constitution than yourself, has suffered so severely that I have just been informed it will be requisite to keep her perfectly calm and undisturbed throughout the whole of the day."

"Oh, then, I will wait patiently; I have plenty to prevent me from growing impatient. I have so many things to tell you."

"Dear, good Madeleine!"

"Do you know, Agricola," said La Mayeux, interrupting the smith, and weeping tears of joy, "I can hardly attempt to make you comprehend the joy and delight I feel when you call me Madeleine, — it sounds so sweet, so soft, so beneficent on your part, that it makes my heart swell with happiness."

"Poor dear girl," exclaimed the smith, with indescribable emotion, "what must she not have suffered to express so great pleasure and gratitude in being merely called by her right name?"

"Imagine, dear brother, how that word from your lips seems filled with a fresh existence. Oh, if you could only fancy the blessed glimpse of the future that seems to dance before my eyes, as your voice utters it; if you could but penetrate into the dear ambitions of my tender hopes, your charming wife, your Angèle, with the face and mind of an angel. Ah, now, in my turn, I bid you turn your gaze on me, and you will see how dear that name is, both to my lips and heart. Yes, yes, your good and lovely Angèle will also call me Madeleine; and your children, Agricola, — those adored little beings,

— their dear and innocent lips will also lisp out Madeleine! To them I shall be their dear good Madeleine; and will they not, by reason of the tender love I bear them, be as much my children as they are their mother's? for I positively claim my share in the sweet delight of bringing them up; so they will belong to us all three, will they not, Agricola? Oh, suffer me — suffer me to weep, it is so soothing and delightful to shed tears without bitterness or need of concealment. Praise be to God, and you, my friend, the source of painful tears is for ever dried up."

An unseen spectatress had witnessed the latter part of this affecting scene, the smith and La Mayeux having been too intently occupied to perceive that Mlle. de Cardoville was standing at the threshold of the door.

As La Mayeux had remarked, this very day which had opened on all with so ill a promise had turned out a day of ineffable felicity to all. Adrienne was radiant with happiness. Djalma had been faithful, — still passionately loved her; the odious appearances by which she had been misled were evidently a fresh machination on the part of Rodin, and it remained only for Mlle. de Cardoville to find out the end and aim of these plots. Another joy was yet in store for her.

As regards happiness, nothing makes persons more penetrating, and thus Adrienne guessed, by La Mayeux's appearance, that there was no longer any secret between the sempstress and the smith, and she could not then restrain herself from exclaiming as she entered:

"Ah, this is the happiest day of my life, for I am not the only one who is happy."

Agricola and La Mayeux turned around quickly. "Mademoiselle," said the smith, "in spite of the promise I made you, I could not conceal from Madeleine that I knew she loved me."

"Now I no longer blush at my love in the presence of Agricola, why should I blush before you, mademoiselle,

— before you who but just now said to me, 'Be proud of this love, for it is noble and pure?'" said La Mayeux, and her happiness gave her strength to rise and lean on Agricola's arm.

"Excellent, excellent, my dear friend," replied Adrienne, putting one of her arms around her to support her; "only one word to excuse an indiscretion with which you may reproach me. If I told your secret to M. Agricola —"

"Do you know why, Madeleine?" exclaimed the smith, interrupting Adrienne. "Another proof of the deliberate generosity of heart which never fails mademoiselle. 'I have long hesitated to tell you this secret,' she said to me this morning, 'but I have now resolved on it. We are about to see her again, — your adopted sister, to whom you are the best of brothers, and without knowing it, without thinking of it, you often wound her cruelly. Now you know her secret, and I rely on your heart to keep it faithfully, and to spare her a thousand griefs, poor dear girl! — griefs the more poignant as they come from you, and which she must suffer silently. Thus, when you mention your wife to her, your happiness, do it so that it will not wound that noble, good, and tender heart.' Yes, Madeleine, this is the reason why mademoiselle has committed what she calls an indiscretion."

"Language fails me, mademoiselle, in order suitably to thank you now and ever," replied La Mayeux.

"See, my dear," observed Adrienne, "how the plots of the wicked turn frequently against themselves, they dreaded your devotion to me, and had ordered the unhappy girl Florine to abstract your journal."

"In order to compel me to quit your house from shame, mademoiselle, when I knew that my most secret thoughts were exposed to the jeers of everybody; now I no longer fear them," said La Mayeux.

"And you are right, my dear; well, this atrocious treachery, which so nearly caused your death, has at this

moment turned to the confusion of the wicked; their stratagem is unveiled, this, and fortunately others also," added Adrienne, thinking of Rose-Pompon.

Then she continued, in a joyful tone:

"Well, at length, we are once more united, more happy than ever, and recovering with our happiness fresh strength against our enemies,—I say our enemies, for all that love me are hateful to these wretches; but courage, the hour is come, and the worthy and good will have their turn."

"Thank Heaven, mademoiselle," said the smith; "and for my part it is not zeal that I want. How glorious to have been able to unmask these villains!"

"Let me remind you, M. Agricola, that you have an appointment with M. Hardy for to-morrow."

"I had not forgotten it, mademoiselle, any more than your generous offers."

"Oh, they are simple enough, he is one of my family. Repeat to him what I shall also write this evening, that all the funds necessary to rebuild and organise his factory are at his command. Not for himself only that I speak, but for a hundred families reduced to a precarious destiny. Entreat him, therefore, to quit as soon as possible the ill-omened house to which he has been conveyed; there are a thousand reasons why he should distrust everything and everybody around him."

"Make your mind easy, mademoiselle, the letter which he wrote me in reply to that which I contrived to convey to him clandestinely was short, but affectionate, though sad. He grants me the interview, I am sure to induce him to decide on quitting this wretched house, and may perhaps bring him away with me, for he has always had entire confidence in my devotion!"

"Well, then, courage, M. Agricola," said Adrienne, putting her cloak on La Mayeux's shoulders, and wrapping it carefully around her; "let us go, for it is getting late; as soon as we reach my house, I will give you a

letter for M. Hardy, and to-morrow you will be so good as to come and give me an account of the result of your visit, will you not?"

Then recollecting herself, Adrienne blushed slightly and said, "No, not to-morrow, write me only, and come the day after to-morrow about noon."

Some moments later, and the young sempstress, supported by Agricola and Adrienne, had descended the staircase of the melancholy house, and having got into the carriage with Mlle. de Cardoville, she begged most earnestly to be allowed to see Céphyse, for it was in vain that Agricola had replied to La Mayeux that it was impossible until the next day.

Thanks to the information which Rose-Pompon had given her, Mlle. de Cardoville, rightly mistrusting all that were around Djalma, thought she had hit upon a means of sending that same evening a letter from herself, which would safely reach the prince's hands.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE TWO CARRIAGES.

It was in the evening of the same day as that on which Mlle. de Cardoville had prevented La Mayeux from suicide.

Eleven o'clock had struck, the night was very dark, the wind blew violently and drove before it the heavy black clouds, which had completely overspread the pale light of the moon.

A hackney-coach was slowly and with difficulty ascending, at the pace of broken-winded horses, up the steep acclivity of the Rue Blanche, near the barrier close to the house which Djalma inhabited.

The vehicle stopped. The coachman, grumbling at the length of the long pull, which ended on this precipitous ascent, turned around on his seat, leaned towards the glass of the coach front window, and said, in a rude tone, to the person who was within:

"Well, here we are at the end of the run. From the top of the Rue de Vangirard to the Barrier Blanche, that is what I call a course, and then with the night so dark you can't see your way two steps before you, for they don't light the lamps, because of the moonshine, which does not shine."

"Look for a small door with a covered entrance; enter it, go on about twenty yards, then stop at the end of the wall," replied a shrill, impatient voice, and with a strong Italian accent.

"Oh, this is some German beggar, who wants to make

me his donkey," said the coachman, ill-temperedly to himself; then he added: "But, *milles tonnerres!* I have just told you that no one can see an inch before his nose, and how the devil then am I to find out your little door?"

"You are exceedingly stupid. Go along the wall, on the right hand quite close to it; the light of your lantern will aid you, and you will easily find the little door; it follows No. 50. If you cannot find it, you must be drunk," replied the voice in the Italian accent, with increasing anger.

The coachman's only answer was to swear like a heathen, flog his tired horses, and then go as close as possible to the wall, on which he fixed his staring eyes, in order to read the numbers by the help of his own lamp.

At the end of a few minutes the coach again stopped.

"I have driven past No. 50, and here's a small door with a portico," said the coachee, "is this here it?"

"Yes," replied the voice, "and now go on twenty steps farther, and then stop."

"All right, then."

"Then get off your box and go and strike twice three blows at the little door we have just passed. Do you understand? Three knocks twice?"

"Which, I suppose, that's what I am to have for myself out of the fare," said the angry jehu.

"When you have driven me back again to the Faubourg St. Germain where I live, you shall have something for yourself if you manage cleverly."

"Good again; what, back to the Faubourg St. Germain? A precious nice drag, says I," replied the coachman, considerably exasperated, "and I pushed my nags, that I might be on the boulevard when the theatres were over. Why, I'm d—d if this isn't a pleasant treat;" then bearing up against his misfortune and relying on the consolation of the *pour-boire*, he resumed, "I'll go

and give the six thumps at the small door, howsumdever."

"Yes, three knocks, then a pause, then three more knocks — you understand?"

"What arterwards?"

"Say to the person who will open the door, they are waiting for you, and then lead him here to the coach."

"Devil burn you!" said the coachman, as he turned around again in his box, adding, as he slashed his horses, "This here German covey has got some dodgery with some freemasons, or some smugglers mayhap. As we are so near the barrier, it would sarve him right to inform against him for giving me such a long spell from the Rue de Vangirard here."

At twenty yards beyond the small door the carriage pulled up again. Coachee descended from the box, in order to execute the orders he had received.

When he gained the little door, he knocked as he had been told, three times, and after a brief pause, three times again.

Some clouds, less opaque, less dark, than those which had until then obscured the moon's disc, cleared away; and after the signal given by the coachman, he was enabled to distinguish when the door opened a man of middle stature, wrapped in a cloak, and with a coloured cap on.

This man came forward two paces into the street, after having shut and locked the door.

"You are waited for," said the coachman to him. "I'll lead you to the coach;" and going before the man in the cloak, who had only nodded in reply, he conducted him to the coach, and was preparing to open the door and put down the steps, when the voice within said:

"There's no occasion for this, the gentleman will not get in; I will talk to him at the door, and will let you know when I am ready to return."

"As much as to say, I shall have plenty of time to wish you all at the devil," muttered coachee; "but I may as well walk about a bit, to get the stiffness out of my legs." And he walked backwards and forwards by the wall, which was close to the small door.

After a few minutes, he heard the distant rolling, which drew nearer and nearer, and ascending the hill quickly, stopped lower down and close to the garden gate.

"Ah, here's some gentleman's coach," said the knight of the whip. "Capital nags to bowl up this stiff hill as they did."

He had just made this remark, when, by the sudden light, he saw a man get out of the carriage, come forward quickly, stop an instant at the little door, open it, enter, and disappear, after having closed it behind him.

"Ah, ah, this is a funny go," said the coachman; "one has gone out, and, lo and behold, another has popped in!" So saying, he went towards the carriage, which was a very handsome turnout, with two splendid horses. The coachman sat motionless in his greatcoat with six capes, holding his whip upright, with the handle resting on his right knee, as it should be.

"This is gallows bad weather to bring out such high-bred 'uns as your'n, comrade," said the humble whip of the hack-coach to the aristocratical automaton, who remained mute and motionless, without seeming to think he was addressed.

"He can't speak French, — he's English, — I see that by the 'osses," said coachee, interpreting thus his silence; then seeing, a step or two on, a very tall footman, standing by the door, dressed in a long and full livery great-coat of yellowish gray, with a sky-blue collar and silver buttons, the coachman, addressing himself to him by way of compensation, and without much variation of theme, remarked:

"This is gallows bad weather to be out in, comrade."

The same imperturbable silence on the part of the *valet de chambre.*

"The —— are both English," said Jehu of the hack, philosophically; and, although very much astonished at the incident of the small door, he recommenced his promenade, going towards his own vehicle.

Whilst the facts we have recorded were passing, the man in the mantle and the man with the Italian accent continued conversing, one still remaining in the hackney-coach, and the other leaning on the door.

The conversation lasted some time, and was spoken in Italian. It related to an absent person, if we may judge by the following:

"Well, then," said the voice which issued from the hack, "this is quite understood?"

"Yes, monseigneur," replied the man in the cloak; "but only in case the eagle should become a serpent."

"And, on the contrary, when you shall receive the other half of the ivory crucifix which I have just given to you —"

"I shall know what it means, monseigneur."

"Continue always to merit and preserve his confidence."

"I will merit and preserve it, monseigneur, because I admire and respect the man; more powerful by his mind, his courage, and his will than the most powerful man in this world. I have knelt before him with humility, as before one of the solemn idols, which are between Bohwanie and her adorers; for he, like me, has it for religion, that we change life for — nothing!"

"Hush, hush," said the voice, in an embarrassed tone, "these comparisons are useless and irreverent; only think how to obey him without reasoning on your obedience."

"Let him speak, and I act. I am in his hands like a corpse, as he likes to say. He has seen — he sees every day my devotion, from the services I render him with

Prince Djalma. If he were to say to me, Kill! although this son of a king — "

"For the love of Heaven, do not have such ideas!" exclaimed the voice, interrupting the man in the cloak. "Thanks to Heaven, such proofs of submission will not be exacted from you."

"It is for him to order, for me to obey. Bohwanie beholds me!"

"I do not doubt your zeal. I know you are a living and intelligent barrier placed between the prince and many guilty interests; and it is because your zeal has been spoken of to me, as also your skill in circumventing the young Indian, and, particularly, your blind devotion in executing the orders given to you, that I have been desirous to acquaint you with everything. You are fanatic towards him whom you serve — that is right. Man ought to be the obedient slave of the god whom he chooses."

"Yes, monseigneur, so long as the god remains god."

"We understand each other perfectly. As to your reward, you know — my promises — "

"My reward! I have it already, monseigneur."

"How?"

"I understand myself."

"Right; and as to the secret — "

"You have guarantees, monseigneur."

"Yes, sufficiently satisfactory."

"And then, again, the importance of the cause I serve is an abundant reason for my zeal and discretion."

"True. You are, moreover, a man of firm and undaunted purpose as well as unflinching energy."

"My lord, such, at least, I endeavour to prove myself."

"And, withal, a religious person — I mean, according to your ideas on such subjects; and there is no small merit in being accounted religious in days like the present, when there is so much impiety abroad; furthermore, I rejoice that you are that way minded. Observe, I still

say, following out your own notions; and by so thinking and acting, you may be able to assist me."

"Oh, rely upon all I can do, my lord, upon the principle that the daring hunter would prefer taking a jackal to six foxes, would sooner have a tiger than ten jackals, a lion than ten tigers, and the onelmis than ten lions."

"What is the onelmis?"

"That which the mind is to matter, the sword to the scabbard, the perfume to the flower, and the head to the body!"

"I comprehend. Never was a more happy comparison. You are evidently a man of sound judgment. Always remember the words you have just uttered, and render yourself more and more worthy the confidence of your god — your idol!"

"May I hope, my lord, he will soon be able to listen to all I have to tell him?"

"Assuredly. In two or three days, at farthest, you will see him, and converse with him. A favourable crisis took place yesterday, and he is now quite out of danger; and once commenced, with a person of his strong mental energy, his cure will be as rapid as was his seizure."

"Shall you see him again to-morrow, my lord?"

"Yes, necessarily, to take my leave ere I return to Rome."

"Then, relate to him a strange circumstance which occurred yesterday, and with which I have had no opportunity of acquainting him."

"Speak!"

"I walked yesterday, in the garden of tombs. Everywhere the dead were being lowered into their narrow slips of earth, while numerous torches sparkled and glittered among the graves, and displayed their gaping, yawning mouths, even amid the blackness of night. Bohwanie smiled rejoicingly from her ebony throne; the blessed recollections inspired by the thoughts of this goddess of

utter annihilation made me view with pleasure the emptying of a cart filled with coffins. The immense pit destined to receive them gaped and yawned like the mouth of hell itself. Dead after dead were thrown into it; but still its expanded jaws yawned and craved for more. All at once, by the light of the torch, I saw an old man beside me, who was weeping. Yes, the old man shed many and seemingly bitter tears. I had seen him before, — he was a Jew, and guardian of the house — that house — you know — in — the — Rue St. François — which you know — "

And the man in the mantle suddenly started, and broke off what he was saying.

"I know — I know! But what ails you? And wherefore do you tremble so? Why have you thus interrupted your discourse?"

"Because in that house is to be found, one hundred and fifty years after it was painted, the picture of an individual, — a man whom I formerly met at the farthermost part of India, on the banks of the Ganges."

And again the man in the mantle ceased speaking, while a second cold shudder seemed to pass over his frame.

"A singular resemblance, doubtless, to the person you knew."

"Singular, indeed, my lord, it could be nothing more."

"But the old Jew! the old Jew! What of him?"

"I will tell you, my lord. Still absorbed in grief, he said to the grave-digger, 'Well, did you find the coffin?'

"'You were quite right,' replied the man; 'it was in the second row in the other pit. I knew it by the description you gave me, — a cross formed of seven black spots. But how did you contrive to know both the place and distinguishing marks of this coffin?'

"'Alas!' replied the old Jew, with bitter sadness;

'it matters but little to you, my friend, how I came by my knowledge; you see that I am but too well informed. Where is the coffin?'

"'Behind the great black marble tomb you know so well, level with the earth, but just covered up sufficiently to hide it from other eyes than your own. Only be quick. During the present bustle, no one will notice you,' continued the grave-digger. 'You have paid me handsomely, and I heartily wish you success in your undertaking, whatever it may be.'"

"And what did the old Jew do with the coffin marked with the seven black spots?"

"He was accompanied by two men, my lord, bearing a litter closed around with curtains. He lighted a lantern, and, followed by these two men, went off in the direction pointed out by the grave-digger. A confusion which ensued, in consequence of several carriages, filled with dead, all arriving at once and striving to take precedence of each other, prevented my keeping up with the old Jew. As soon, however, as I could make my way, I sought him diligently among the tombs, but without success. I could see nothing of him."

"Yours is, indeed, a strange recital. And what could have been the motive of the Jew in desiring to obtain the coffin?"

"I have heard it said, my lord, that such as he employ the bodies of the dead in compounding magical charms and mystic spells."

"'Tis more than possible; for these miscreants are capable of any wickedness, even of trafficking with the enemy of mankind himself! However, we will consider your report, which probably involves some most important discovery."

Midnight sounded from some distant clock.

"Midnight! Already?"

"Even so, my lord."

"Then I must go. Adieu! You again promise me,

on your solemn oath, that, in the event of a certain circumstance mutually agreed upon occurring, that directly you receive the remaining half of the little ivory crucifix I but now gave you, you will perform what you have sworn to."

"My, lord, I have so pledged myself, in the name of Bohwanie."

"Do not forget that, for better security, the person who brings you the other half of the cross will say to you— Let me see if you recollect the words he is to use. What are they?"

"My lord, your messenger may say, 'Friend, there is many a slip between the cup and the lip!'"

"Quite right. Farewell! Secrecy and fidelity!"

"Secrecy and fidelity, my lord!" replied the man in the mantle.

A few seconds after, and the vehicle rolled away, bearing with it the Cardinal Malipieri, who had been the person engaged in conversation with the man in the mantle, whom the reader has, doubtless, recognised as Faringhea, and who now, returning to the small garden door leading to the house occupied by Djalma, was about to put his key into the lock, when, to his extreme surprise, the door suddenly opened and a man came forth. Rushing furiously on the stranger, Faringhea seized him violently by the collar, exclaiming, "Who are you, and whence come you?"

The stranger evidently felt displeased, as well as dissatisfied, with the manner in which this question was put, for, instead of replying, he only redoubled his efforts to free himself from the grip of his assailant, at the same time shouting as loudly as possible:

"Pierre! Pierre! Help, help!"

And immediately the carriage, which had been stationed some little way off, dashed up at full speed, and Pierre, the huge footman, springing to the ground, caught the métis by the shoulders and flung him to the ground,

CHAPTER XXX.

THE RENDEZVOUS.

THE day after that on which Dupont had fulfilled his mission to Djalma, the prince was walking up and down with hasty and impatient steps in the little Indian salon of the Rue Blanche. This room, as we know, communicated with the conservatory whence Adrienne had seen him for the first time. Desirous of dressing himself now as he had been attired on that occasion, he wore a tunic of white cashmere, with a deep red turban, and a belt of the same colour. His leggings of carnation, embroidered with gold, displayed the perfect symmetry of his leg, and sloped down over a small white morocco slipper with red heels.

Happiness has an action so instantaneous, and, indeed, so material, in young, lively, and ardent imaginations, that Djalma, who, the evening before, had been dispirited, dejected, despairing, was now scarcely to be recognised. The golden pallor of his clear and transparent complexion was no longer livid and dulled. His large eyeballs, but lately veiled like dark diamonds with a humid vapour, now shone with soft brilliancy in the midst of the pearly orbs. His lips, so long pallid, had now become of a colour as lively, as velvety, as the most resplendent flowers of his native land.

From time to time pausing from his hasty walking, he drew from his bosom a small paper carefully folded, and raised it to his lips with ineffable delight; then, unable to contain the impulse of his happiness, a kind of joyful

cry, full and sonorous, burst from his bosom, and with a bound the prince was before the glass door which separated the salon from the conservatory where he had for the first time seen Mlle. de Cardoville.

Singular power of memory — marvellous hallucination of a mind, beset, governed, by one fixed, incessant idea! Very often Djalma believed he had, or, rather, had really seen the adored image of Adrienne appear to him through this crystal sheet, and still more, the illusion was so complete that, with his eyes ardently fixed on the vision he had evoked, he had, aided by a pencil dipped in carmine, followed and traced with astonishing accuracy the profile of the ideal features which the delirium of his imagination presented to his sight.[1]

It was before these lovely lines, traced in the brightest carmine, that Djalma stood in deep contemplation, after having read and re-read, and carried again and again to his lips, the letter he had received the evening before from the hands of Dupont.

Djalma was not alone. Faringhea followed all the prince's movements with a subtle attention and gloomy glance. Keeping himself respectfully standing in a corner of the salon, the métis seemed occupied with unfolding and spreading out Djalma's bedej, a sort of *burnous* of Indian material of light and silky texture, of which the brown shade was almost lost amidst gold and silver embroidery of exquisite delicacy.

The countenance of the métis was careworn and sinister. He could not be deceived — the letter delivered to Djalma from Mlle. de Cardoville on the previous evening by M. Dupont could alone have caused his joy, for, no doubt, he knew he was beloved; and his determined silence towards Faringhea since he had been in the salon alarmed him greatly, nor could he account for it.

On the previous evening, after having quitted M.

[1] Some curiosity collections have similar sketches, the productions of Indian art of primitive simplicity.

Dupont in a state of anxiety easily understood, the métis had returned hastily to the prince, in order that he might judge of the effect of Mlle. de Cardoville's letter, but he found the salon closed. He knocked, but no one answered. Then, although the night was far advanced, he despatched hastily a letter to Rodin, in which he announced the visit of M. Dupont and the probable intention and effect of that visit.

Djalma had passed a night in all the exaltations of happiness and hope, — in a state of feverish impatience impossible to describe. It was only in the morning when returning to his sleeping-room that he had taken some minutes' repose, and dressed himself alone.

Several times, but in vain, the métis had rapped discreetly at the door of Djalma's chamber. About noon, only, the prince had rung to order his carriage at half-past two o'clock. Faringhea had answered the summons, and the prince had given him his commands without looking at him, and as if he were speaking to one of the inferior domestics. Was this mistrust or the preoccupation of the prince? Such were the questions which the métis asked himself with increasing anguish; for the designs of which he was the most active, most immediate instrument might be ruined by the least suspicion of Djalma.

"Oh, the hours! — the hours! How slow they are!" exclaimed the young Indian, in a low and trembling tone.

"The hours were very long, you said, the day before yesterday, monseigneur."

And as he said these words, Faringhea approached the prince, in order to attract his attention; seeing that he did not succeed, he advanced another step, and added:

"Your joy seems very great, monseigneur; will you condescend to inform your poor and faithful subject of its cause, that he may rejoice with his lord?"

If he had felt the sense of the words of the métis, Djalma had not heard one of them. He made no reply, — his large black eyes were swimming in vacancy; he seemed to smile with adoration at some enchanting vision; his two hands were crossed over his breast, as the natives of his country place them when engaged in prayer.

After some moments of such contemplation, he said:

"What is the hour?"

But he seemed rather to ask this question of himself than of any other person.

"Nearly two o'clock, monseigneur," replied Faringhea.

Djalma, after having heard this reply, seated himself, and hid his face in his hands, as if to collect himself and absorb himself utterly in his delicious meditation.

Faringhea, extremely uneasy, and desirous at every risk to attract Djalma's attention, approached him, and, almost certain of the effect of the words he was about to utter, said, in a low and penetrating voice:

"Monseigneur, I am assured that you are indebted to Mlle. de Cardoville for the happiness you are enjoying."

He had scarcely uttered this name, than Djalma, starting, bounded from his chair, and, looking the métis in the face, exclaimed, as if he had but just perceived him:

"Faringhea! — you here? What do you seek?"

"Your faithful servant partakes your joy, monseigneur."

"What joy?"

"That excited in you by the letter of Mlle. de Cardoville, monseigneur."

Djalma made no reply, but his look shone with so much happiness, so much serenity, that the métis felt himself entirely reassured; there was not the slightest shade of doubt or distrust in the joyful features of the prince.

Djalma, after a silence of some moments, raised his eyes, half covered by a tear, to the métis, and replied,

with the expression of a heart which overflows with love and bliss:

"Oh, happiness, happiness! It is good and great like God! It is God!"

"This happiness was due to you, monseigneur, after so much suffering."

"When? Ah, yes, formerly I suffered — formerly, too, I was at Java, but that is some years ago."

"But, monseigneur, this happiness does not surprise me. What have I always said to you? Do not despair, feign a violent love for another, and this disdainful young lady —"

At these words Djalma gave the métis a glance so piercing that he stopped, but the prince, in the kindest tone, said to him:

"Go on, I hear you."

Then leaning his chin in his hand, and his elbow on his knee, he fixed his eyes on Faringhea with a look steadfast, but yet so excessively sweet, so penetrating, that Faringhea, that soul of iron, for a moment felt troubled by slight remorse.

"I said, monseigneur," he replied, "that in following the counsels of your faithful slave, who advised you to feign a passionate love for another woman, you have brought Mlle. de Cardoville — so disdainful, so proud — to come to you. Did I not foretell this?"

"Yes, you did foretell this!" replied Djalma, still resting on his elbow, and keeping his eyes fixed on the métis with the same attention, with even the same expression of kindness.

Faringhea's surprise increased. The prince usually, without treating him harshly, yet maintaining the hauteur and imperious command common to their mutual countries, had never before spoken to him with such condescension; and knowing all the evil he had done the prince, mistrustful, like all wicked persons, the métis believed for an instant that his master's

kind manner concealed some snare, and he continued, with diminished assurance:

"Believe me, monseigneur, this very day, if you know how to profit by your advantages, this day will console you for all your griefs, and they have been terrible; for yesterday even — although you are so generous as to forget it, and you are wrong — yesterday even you suffered terribly; but you were not alone in your suffering, that proud young girl, too, she has also suffered."

"Do you think so?" observed Djalma.

"I am certain of it, monseigneur. Judge when she saw you at the theatre with another woman what she must have felt. If she loved you slightly, her self-love would be bitterly shocked; if she loved you with passion, she has been stricken to the heart; thus weary of suffering, she comes to you."

"So that, under any circumstances, you are certain that she has suffered very much — very much, and you have not pitied her?" said Djalma, in a constrained voice, but still with a tone full of sweetness.

"Before thinking of pitying others, monseigneur, I think of your sufferings, and they affect me too much to leave any pity for others," added Faringhea, hypocritically. Rodin's influence had already modified the Phansigar.

"This is strange!" said Djalma, speaking to himself, and looking at the métis even more steadfastly than before, but still with kindness.

"What is strange, monseigneur?"

"Nothing. But tell me, since your advice has succeeded for me so well with the past, what think you of the future?"

"Of the future, monseigneur?"

"Yes, for in an hour's time I am to be with Mlle. de Cardoville."

"That is serious, monseigneur; the future depends entirely on this first interview."

"It is just what I was thinking of."

"Believe me, monseigneur, that women are never so desperately enamoured as for the bold man who spares them all the embarrassment of refusal."

"Explain yourself more clearly."

"Well, monseigneur, they despise the timid, languishing lover, who, in a humble voice, sues for that which he should take."

"But I am to-day to see Mlle. de Cardoville for the first time."

"You have seen her a thousand times in your dreams, monseigneur, and she has seen you in her dreams, for she loves you. There is not one of your thoughts of love but finds an echo in her heart. All your most ardent adorations are for her, and she has experienced them for you. Love has not two languages, and, without seeing each other, you have mutually said all you had to say. Now, to-day act *en maître*, and she is yours."

"This is strange — strange!" said Djalma, a second time, and not removing his eyes from Faringhea.

Misunderstanding the meaning which the prince attached to these words, the métis continued:

"Believe me, monseigneur, however strange it may seem to you, it is wise counsel. Recall the past. Was it by playing the part of the timid lover that you brought to your feet this haughty young lady, monseigneur? No, it was by pretending to disdain her for another woman. So, then, no weakness; the lion does not sigh like the weak turtle-dove, — this fierce sultan of the desert has no regard for a few plaintive moans of the lioness, who is even more grateful than offended at his rude and wild caresses; and thus, submissive, happy, fearful, she compliantly follows the footsteps of her master. Believe me, monseigneur, dare — dare! And this very day you will be the adored sultan of this young girl, whose beauty all Paris admires."

After some minutes' silence, Djalma, shaking his head with an expression of tender commiseration, said to the métis, in his soft and manly voice:

"Why betray me thus? Why counsel me thus wickedly to employ violence, terror, surprise, towards an angel of purity whom I respect as I would my mother? Is it not enough for you to be devoted to my enemies, to those who have pursued me even to Java?"

Had Djalma, with fierce eye, terrible look, and upraised poniard, darted on the métis, the latter would not have been so much surprised, and, perhaps, less frightened than when he heard Djalma reproach him with his treason in accents of such mild reproach.

Faringhea receded a step as if about to stand on his defence.

Djalma continued with the same calmness:

"Do not be afraid. Yesterday I should have killed you, I tell you; but to-day propitious love makes me equitable and clement. I feel for you pity without gall. I pity you, for you must indeed have been very wretched to have become so very wicked."

"I, monseigneur?" exclaimed the métis, with increasing amazement.

"You must have suffered very much. Mankind must have been very pitiless towards you, poor wretch, that you should be so pitiless in your hatred, and that the sight of happiness like mine could not disarm you! Really, when I listened to you just now, I experienced for you sincere commiseration when I saw the sad perseverance of your hatred — "

"Monseigneur, I do not know, but — "

And the métis, stammering, could not find a word to utter.

"What injury have I ever done you?"

"None, none, monseigneur!" replied the métis.

"Then, wherefore hate me thus? Why seek so fiercely to do me ill? Was it not sufficient to give me

the perfidious counsel to feign a shameful love for the young girl you brought hither, and who, weary at the miserable part she played here, has left the house?"

"Your feigned love for that young girl, monseigneur," replied Faringhea, resuming his coolness gradually, "has overcome the coldness of —"

"Do not say so," said the prince, with the same mildness, and interrupting him; "if I enjoy this felicity, which renders me compassionate towards you, which raises me above myself, it is because Mlle. de Cardoville knows now that I have not for a moment ceased to love her as she should be loved, with adoration, with respect. You, on the contrary, by counselling me as you have done, had the design of separating us for ever — but you have failed."

"Monseigneur, if you think thus of me you must consider me as your most deadly enemy?"

"Fear nothing, I repeat to you. I have no right to blame you. In the madness of my grief I have listened to you — followed your advice. I have not been your dupe, but your accomplice. Only confess that, when you saw me at your mercy, dejected, wretched, was it not cruel in you to advise me to do that which might have been the most fatal thing in the world?"

"The ardour of my zeal may have misled me, monseigneur."

"I wish to believe so. Yet, to-day again — again evil incitements — you were as pitiless for my happiness as you had been for my misery, — those delights of the heart, in which you saw me plunged, only inspired you with one desire, that of converting my joy into despair."

"I, monseigneur?"

"Yes, you! You thought, by following your counsels, I should destroy myself, dishonour myself for ever in the eyes of Mlle. de Cardoville. What is it, I ask? Whence this deadly enmity? Wherefore? Again, what ill have I ever done thee?"

"Monseigneur, you judge wrongly, and I —"

"Listen to me. I do not desire that you should be wicked and treacherous any longer. I would make you good. In our country we charm the most dangerous serpents, and tame tigers. Well, I wish to tame you by force of kindness, you who are a man, you who have a mind to guide, a heart to love, — this day confers on me happiness divine, you shall bless this day. What can I do for you? What do you wish? Is it gold? You shall have gold. Will you have more than gold? Will you have a friend, whose true friendship will console you, and, by causing you to forget the woes that have made you wicked, render you good? Are you willing that I, though a king's son, should be this friend? I will be so; yes, in spite of the ill — no, because of the ill, you have done me, I will be to you a sincere friend. Happy to say to myself, 'The day on which that angel told me she loved me, my happiness was very great; in the morning I had an implacable enemy, in the evening his hatred was changed into friendship.' So now, believe me, Faringhea, misfortune makes the wicked, happiness the good — be happy!"

At this instant the clock struck two.

The prince started; it was the moment for setting out for his rendezvous with Adrienne.

Djalma's striking countenance, still embellished by the sweet and ineffable expression that animated it whilst addressing the métis, seemed lighted up with a divine ray.

Approaching Faringhea, he extended his hand to him with a gesture of grace and tenderness, saying:

"Your hand."

The métis, whose forehead was bathed with cold perspiration, his features pale, altered, and discomposed, hesitated for an instant; then, overcome, subdued, and fascinated, he shudderingly extended his hand to the prince, who shook it, saying, in the fashion of his country:

"You place your hand confidingly in the hand of a loyal friend. This hand will always be open to you. Adieu, Faringhea! I feel now worthy of kneeling before the angel."

And Djalma went out in order to go to Adrienne.

Despite his ferocity, his pitiless hatred for the human species, overcome by the noble conduct, the clemency of Djalma, the gloomy fanatic of Bohwanie said with affright to himself:

"I have touched his hand — he is henceforth sacred for me." Then, after a moment's silence, his reflection returning to him, he exclaimed, "Yes; but he is not sacred for him who, according to what they replied to me last night, should await him at the door of this house."

So saying, the métis ran into an adjoining room, which looked into the street, lifted up the corner of a curtain, and said, with anxiety:

"His carriage moves on — the man comes towards him. Hell! the carriage goes on, and I can see nothing more."

CHAPTER XXXI.

EXPECTATION.

By a singular coincidence of thought, Adrienne had observed, as well as Djalma, to be dressed as she was at her first interview with him in the house of the Rue Blanche.

For the place of this interview, so important to her happiness, Mlle. de Cardoville, with her natural tact, had chosen the great reception-room in the Hôtel de Cardoville, where there were several family portraits. The most conspicuous of these were her father and mother. The apartment was very large and high, and, like those which led to it, was furnished with the imposing luxury of the age of Louis XIV. The ceiling, painted by Lebrun, had for its subject the triumph of Apollo, and displayed the fullness of design and the vigorous colouring of the artist in the middle of a large cornice magnificently sculptured and gilt, supported at the angles by four large gilt figures representing the seasons. The panels, hung with crimson damask, surrounded with framework, served for the hanging of the large family portraits which ornamented the room.

It is more easy to conceive than describe the thousand emotions which agitated Mlle. de Cardoville, in proportion as she approached the moment of her interview with Djalma, their meeting had until then been prevented by so many painful obstacles. Adrienne knew that her enemies were so vigilant, so active, and so

perfidious, that she was really in doubt as to her happiness. At every moment, in spite of herself, she looked at the clock. In a few minutes and the hour appointed would strike.

At length it struck.

Each sound of the clock resounded deep in Adrienne's heart. She thought that Djalma, doubtless from reserve, had not allowed himself to anticipate the hour appointed by her, and, far from blaming this discretion, she felt that he was right; but, from this moment, at the smallest noise she heard in the neighbouring apartments, she suspended her breath and listened with anxious hope.

During the first minutes which followed the hour at which she expected Djalma, Mlle. de Cardoville had no serious alarm, and calmed her impatience, somewhat disturbed, by this calculation (very weak and silly in the eyes of persons who have never known the feverish agitation of delightful expectation), saying that the clock in the house at the Rue Blanche might differ somewhat from that of the Rue d'Anjou.

But in proportion as this supposed difference, which was probable, grew into a delay of a quarter of an hour, twenty minutes, and more, Adrienne felt increasing uneasiness; and twice or thrice the young girl, rising up with palpitating heart, went on tiptoe to listen at the door of the salon.

She heard nothing.

Half-past three o'clock struck.

Unable to repress her increasing alarm, and still clinging to hope, however delayed, she returned to the mantelpiece, then rang, after having in a manner composed her features that they might not betray any emotion.

After a few seconds a gray-headed *valet de chambre*, clothed in black, opened the door, and then awaited with respectful silence the orders of his mistress, who said to him, in a calm tone:

"André, desire Hébe to give you a smelling-bottle I left on the mantelpiece in my chamber, and bring it to me."

André bowed, and at the moment he was about to quit the room to execute Adrienne's command, — a command which she had only given in order to ask another question, the importance of which she was anxious to conceal from the eyes of her servants, who were informed of the expected coming of the prince, — Mlle. de Cardoville added, with an air of indifference pointing to the clock:

"Does this clock go correctly?"

André drew out his own watch, looked at it, and replied:

"Yes, mademoiselle, I am right by the Tuileries; and it is now more than half-past three o'clock by my watch."

"Thank you!" said Adrienne, with kindness.

André bowed; but before he left the room he said to Adrienne:

"I had forgotten to say to you, mademoiselle, that M. Maréchal Simon called here an hour since; as you desired to be denied to everybody except M. le Prince, we said that mademoiselle did not see any one to-day."

"Quite right," replied Adrienne.

André again bowed, left the apartment, and again all was silent.

Inasmuch as, until the last minute of the hour of her interview with Djalma, Adrienne's hope was not disturbed by the least doubt, so the feeling under which she now began to suffer was the more terrible. Casting then a despairing look at one of the portraits placed over her head, and on one side of the mantelpiece, she murmured, with a plaintive and distressing accent:

"Oh, my mother!"

Scarcely had Mlle. de Cardoville pronounced these words than the rumbling of a carriage was heard, as

entering the courtyard it slightly shook the window frames.

The young girl started, and was unable to repress a slight cry of joy; her heart bounded in anticipation of Djalma, — for this time she felt it was he. She was as certain of it as if she had seen the prince with her eyes.

She seated herself, wiping away a tear suspended by her long lids; her hand trembled like a leaf.

The noise of several doors being opened soon confirmed the young lady in her conviction. The two gilded folding doors of the salon turned on their hinges, and the prince appeared.

Whilst a second *valet de chambre* closed the doors, André, entering a few seconds after Djalma, whilst he was coming towards Adrienne, placed on a gilt table, close to the young lady, a small silver tray, on which was her crystal scenting-bottle, and then the door shut.

The prince and Mlle. de Cardoville were alone.

CHAPTER XXXII.

ADRIENNE AND DJALMA.

THE prince was slowly advancing towards Mlle. de Cardoville.

In spite of the impetuosity of the young Indian's passion, his unassured step, so timid, yet so delightful, betrayed his profound emotion. He had not dared yet to raise his eyes to Adrienne. He had become very pale; and his beautiful hands, religiously crossed over his chest, according to the customs of adoration in his country, trembled excessively; and he paused a few paces from Adrienne, with his head slightly bent to the ground.

This embarrassment, which would have appeared ridiculous in any other, was touching in the prince, but twenty years of age, of almost fabulous courage, of so heroic, so generous a character that travellers never spoke of the son of King Kadja-Sing but with admiration and respect.

Soft emotion, chaste reserve, the more interesting if we recollect that the burning passions of this young man were the more easily exalted as they had been until now constantly repressed.

Mlle. de Cardoville, not less embarrassed, less troubled, had remained sitting, whilst Djalma remained with his eyes on the ground; but the burning blushes of her cheeks, the hasty palpitations of her virgin heart, revealed an emotion which she did not attempt to conceal.

In spite of the firmness of her mind, by turns so gay

and acute, so kind and severe, in spite of the decision of her independent and proud character, in spite of her knowledge of society, Adrienne, displaying equally with Djalma an unsophisticated embarrassment, or delicious agitation, shared that kind of unutterable passing bewilderment, beneath which these two loving, ardent, and pure souls seemed overwhelmed, as though unable to support, at the same time, the excitement of their palpitating senses and the intoxicating passion of their hearts.

And yet their eyes had not yet met. Both feared the first electric look, — the invincible attraction of two loving and impassioned creatures to one another, the sacred fire which, more rapid than lightning, fires, burns their blood, and frequently, almost without their consciousness, raises them from earth to heaven; for it is to approach heaven, to resign oneself with a religious impulse to the most noble, the most irresistible of the inclinations implanted within us, — the sole inclination, in fact, which the Dispenser of all things has vouchsafed to sanctify, by endowing it with a spark of his creative divinity.

Djalma first raised his eyes, which were humid, yet sparkling, — the fervour of an excited love, the burning ardour of youth, so long repressed; the excited admiration of ideal beauty was legible in this look, though it was impressed by respectful timidity, and gave to the features of the youthful prince an undefinable, irresistible expression.

Irresistible, for Adrienne, meeting that look, trembled in all her body, and felt as if magnetically attracted. Her eyes were already yielding to a feeling of lassitude, when, by a supreme effort of will and dignity, she overcame her troubled feeling, rose from her chair, and, in a trembling voice, said to Djalma:

"Prince, I am happy to receive you here;" then, with a gesture pointing to one of the portraits suspended be-

hind her, Adrienne added, as if she were introducing him, "Prince, — my mother!"

By a thought of rarest delicacy, Adrienne thus, as it were, had her mother present at her interview with Djalma.

This was a safeguard for herself and the prince, against the impulses of a first meeting, the more irresistible as each knew they were passionately loved, — that they were both free, and were only responsible to Heaven for the treasures of happiness and pleasure with which they had been so richly endowed.

The prince understood Adrienne's thought; and thus, when the young lady pointed out to him the portrait of her mother, Djalma, by a spontaneous movement, full of charming simplicity, bowed, and, bending his knee before the portrait, said, in a low, but manly voice, addressing the painting:

"I will love you, I will bless you as my mother, — and my mother, also, in my thought, shall be here, like you, beside her child."

Nothing could better have expressed the feeling which induced Mlle. de Cardoville to place herself, as it were, under the protection of her maternal friend and shield. Certain, from this instant, of the purity and congeniality of the prince's affection, the happy girl freely gave herself up to all the delight of a free enjoyment of her tenderness for her young relative, and the rich glow of happiness gradually succeeded to the conflicting anxieties by which her mind had so lately been torn. Reseating herself, and smilingly pointing to a chair opposite her own, she said:

"Be seated, I pray, my dear cousin! For by that name I must henceforward address you, the word 'prince' sounding too formal, as well as savouring too much of courtly etiquette, for those so nearly related as ourselves. And you, too, must adopt the same mode of address when speaking to me; and so

having settled that we strictly abide by the rule of always calling each other 'cousin,' let us begin our friendly talk."

"With all my heart," replied Djalma, while a bright glow rushed over his cheek at the bare idea of being permitted thus familiarly to address the divinity who ruled his every thought.

"And as frankness and candour should form the basis of all friendships," rejoined Adrienne, regarding the prince with a sweet smile, "I will commence with scolding you a little!"

But Djalma replied not; instead of taking the seat pointed out to him, he still continued standing, leaning his elbow on the mantelpiece, in an attitude replete with grace and expressive of the profoundest respect.

"Yes, indeed, cousin," pursued Adrienne, "I have to find fault with you for — for — having made me await your coming, as well as think you should have been here sooner — "

"And yet, my fair cousin, when you have heard my explanation, you will, perhaps, chide me for not having delayed my visit more than I did."

"What mean you?"

"Just at the moment of my leaving home, a man with whose features I was unacquainted approached the carriage, and said, with so great an appearance of truth that I fully believed his words, 'You can save the life of one who has been as a second father to you, — Maréchal Simon is in imminent danger, and if you wish to aid him, you must follow me without one instant's delay.'"

"'Twas a snare laid to entrap you," cried Adrienne, eagerly. "Maréchal Simon was here scarcely an hour ago."

"Is it possible?" exclaimed Djalma, joyfully, and as if relieved from a painful and oppressive weight. "Ah, then, at last, this happy day will have no cloud of sorrow to dim its brightness!"

"But how was it," inquired Adrienne, "that you did not mistrust this strange emissary?"

"Some words which subsequently fell from the man aroused my suspicions," replied Djalma; "although at first I had not hesitated to take the road he pointed out, fearing that the maréchal might, indeed, be placed in danger, from the numerous enemies, you are aware, my dear cousin, who seek to injure him as much as they desire to effect our misery."

"Upon reflection, cousin, I think you decided rightly in following the messenger, for there was but too great reason to believe in the existence of some fresh plot against the maréchal, and at the slightest suspicion of such a thing it was imperative on you to hasten to his assistance."

"And I did so, even though you expected me!"

"You made a noble and generous sacrifice by so doing," replied Adrienne, deeply touched by the prince's words and manner; "and, were it possible to augment the esteem I entertain for you, your conduct could not fail to increase it. But tell me, what became of the man employed to draw you into the snare?"

"By my orders he ascended the carriage where I was sitting. Uneasy as to the position of the maréchal, and growing desperate as I found the precious moments pass away which should have brought me to your side, I strictly and closely questioned the man, who, several times, returned embarrassed or evasive answers; and then the idea first occurred to me that the tale I had listened to was but a scheme to entrap me in some vile snare. Recollecting, too, all the base acts that had been tried to ruin me in your estimation, I resolved upon coming hither first. The consternation and rage of the man when he found that I was not to be moved by his solicitations were alone sufficient to enlighten me as to his treachery. Still a vague uneasiness possessed my mind, as I considered the possibility of Maréchal

Simon's being also in the hands of dangerous, because hidden foes; but those apprehensions are happily relieved by your assurances of our friend's safety."

"Our enemies appear as implacable as perseveringly bent upon our destruction," said Adrienne; "but it matters not. In our extreme happiness we can pity and forget their hate."

Then pausing for a few seconds, she added, with her accustomed frankness:

"Cousin, I can neither hide nor conceal what is passing in my thoughts; let us for awhile revert to the past, which has occasioned us both so much sorrow, and after that let it all be consigned to oblivion, like an evil and uneasy dream."

"Speak on, dear cousin," replied the prince, "and be assured of my replying with perfect sincerity to every question you may put, even at the risk of injuring myself in your esteem by so doing."

"Then tell me how could you venture to show yourself in public with —"

"With that young female?" asked Djalma, impatiently interrupting Adrienne.

"Yes, cousin, that young girl who accompanied you to the Porte St. Martin," answered Mlle. de Cardoville, gently, though firmly, while her heart waited with devouring anxiety for Djalma's reply.

"A stranger to the customs of this country," cried Djalma, without confusion, for he uttered the plain and unvarnished truth, "my mind weakened by despair, and led astray by the fatal counsels of a man devoted to my enemies, I believed, according to his advice, that, by affecting a love for another in your presence, I should awaken your jealousy, and that —"

"Enough, enough, cousin," exclaimed Adrienne, in her turn interrupting Djalma, for the purpose of sparing him a painful and humiliating confession; "I understand it all now. And I, too, must have been blinded

by despair, or I should have seen through the vile scheme to separate us; more especially after your intrepid though imprudent action, when you risked death itself to regain my bouquet," pursued Adrienne, shuddering at the bare recollection. "One word more," continued she; "although my heart anticipates your reply ere I ask the question — tell me whether you received a letter from me on the morning of the day on which I met you at the theatre?"

Djalma answered not, but a heavy cloud passed over his fine countenance, while, for a brief space, his features assumed an aspect so menacing and wrathful as alarmed Adrienne; but this violent agitation soon subsided, as though from the calm whisperings of internal peace and happiness, and the forehead of the prince became open, candid, and serene as before.

"I have been more merciful than I thought for," said he, observing the surprise with which Adrienne was observing him, "I wished to come into your presence worthy of you, dear cousin, and for that purpose I pardoned the guilty wretch who, to serve my enemies, gave me, and still continues to offer, such detestable advice. This very man, I feel assured, kept your letter from me. A few minutes ago, while reflecting upon all the wretchedness his villainy had caused me, I thought I had shown him too much clemency; but when I remembered your letter of yesterday, my breast could find no room for anger. Then let us for ever forget our past misery, our fears, our mistrusts, our mutual suspicions, let us banish from our minds the recollection of those hours of torment when we doubted each other's faith."

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Mlle. de Cardoville, clasping her hands and looking upwards with ineffable joy, "let us but rejoice that at length the pure light of truth has for ever dispersed the dark treachery of our enemies." And then, as though her heart were for ever relieved

from the gloomy thoughts which had so long oppressed it, she continued, "Henceforward the happy future is all our own, — a future so bright, so radiant with pure, unmixed delight, a vista of joys, unfettered by obstacles or difficulties, that the eye droops before its boundless splendours!"

No language can portray the heightened rapture, the thrilling tenderness with which Adrienne pronounced these words; but, suddenly, a soft melancholy stole over her lovely features, while, in a voice of deep emotion, she murmured:

"Alas! alas! to think that at a moment like this there should be any who suffer in body or in mind upon the earth."

This burst of pity and unfeigned commiseration for the unfortunate at the very moment when the noble-minded girl believed herself on the very pinnacle of human happiness made so lively an impression on the mind of Djalma, that, involuntarily throwing himself on his knees before Adrienne, he clasped his hands and turned towards her his handsome countenance, on which was impressed an adoration almost divine. Then, after gazing with ineffable tenderness for several minutes, he bowed his head as if in silent adoration. For some time the most profound silence reigned around, which was first interrupted by Adrienne, who, perceiving a tear steal from between the slender fingers of Djalma, exclaimed:

"What ails you, cousin?"

Then, with a movement more rapid than thought itself, she bent forward towards the prince, and removed his hands which were still pressed against his face. As the covering fell from the features of Djalma, it revealed the large pearly drops which were rapidly coursing each other down his cheeks.

"You are weeping, too!" cried Mlle. de Cardoville, so much carried away by her feelings that she still

retained the hands of Djalma between her own, so that, unable to dry his own tears, the young Indian was compelled to allow them to trickle, like drops of crystal, adown his pale cheeks.

"No earthly happiness is comparable to mine," cried the prince, in a tone of soft, mellifluous tenderness; "and yet," added he, with a sort of irrepressible melancholy, "I feel a degree of sadness for which I cannot account, yet it must needs be so; for while you rain celestial happiness upon me, I have but common earthly joys to offer in return. Alas, alas! what can man offer in exchange for divinity, — he may worship, idolise, bless, and adore, but never can he return the rich treasures he receives, and therefore he sighs, not in his pride, but in his heart."

With Djalma this language expressed no exaggerated passion, he spoke but the true and natural thoughts of his heart, and this hyperbolical manner of speaking, peculiar as it was to the East, was alone equal to conveying his impassioned thoughts. His own manner of expressing his sense of his unworthiness to approach the idol of his love was so sincere, so unaffected, his humility so gentle and subdued, that Adrienne, touched almost to tears, replied with an undefinable expression of earnest tenderness:

"Dear cousin, we are each as happy as mortals can hope to be; and yet, although arising from different sources, mournful ideas rise to the mind of each. Our prospect of future happiness is boundless and without limit, and the very immensity of our felicity startles and overwhelms our minds. The powers of the soul and body are unequal to contemplate joys such as those our horizon presents, and thus the full flow of our overcharged hearts oppresses and weighs us down. So do the flowers hold down their drooping heads, as though exhausted and faded beneath the fervid heat of that glorious orb which is at once their light and their life. Ah, cousin, this

sadness we feel, though extreme, is yet sweet and refreshing to our hearts."

And as Adrienne pronounced these last words, her voice sunk more and more while her head drooped gently forwards, as though bending beneath the weight of her happiness. Djalma meanwhile remained kneeling before her, his hands still contained in hers, so that as Adrienne stooped towards the prince her ivory forehead and golden tresses touched the pale amber of Djalma's cheek, and mingled with his raven curls.

And so the lovers wept; and their sweet, yet silent tears fell slowly, until they trickled on the beautiful clasped hands of the enamoured pair.

While this scene was being enacted at the Hôtel de Cardoville, Agricola repaired to the Rue de Vaugirard, the bearer of a letter from Adrienne to M. Hardy.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE "IMITATION."

M. HARDY occupied, as we have said, a pavilion in the Maison de Retraite annexed to the residence occupied in the Rue Vangirard by a considerable number of reverend *pères* of the Company of Jesus. Nothing could be more calm, more quiet than this abode, where they always spoke in a low tone, and where the very servants had something soft in their words, and demure in their steps.

As in everything else subjected to the compressive and annihilating action of these men, animation was wanting in this house of gloomy stillness. The boarders led an existence of heavy monotony, of chilling regularity, interrupted from time to time by certain devotional exercises; and thus, according to the interested calculations of the reverend fathers, the mind without nourishment, without exterior communication, without excitement, languished in solitude; the beatings of the heart seemed to become slower, the soul became torpid, the system gradually weakened, and, finally, all free will, free judgment was destroyed, and the *pensionnaires*, subjected to the same scheme of complete withering away, became also as dead bodies in the hands of the congregationists.

The aim and end of these manœuvres were clear and plain: they assured the success of inveigling all dispositions alike, the incessant object of the skilful policy and pitiless cupidity of these priests; and by means of the

vast sums of which they thus became masters or depositaries, they pursued and assured the success of their projects, even if murder, incendiarism, rebellion, and all the horrors of civil war, excited and maintained by them, should set bleeding in every pore the country whose control they so darkly desired.

As a lever, the money acquired by all possible means, even the most shameful and criminal; as the end, the despotic domination over minds and consciences, in order to work them out with due fructification to the profit of the Company of Jesus, — such have been, and such will always be, the means and ends of this fraternity.

Thus, amongst other means of making money flow into their always gaping treasury, the reverend fathers had founded the retreat in which M. Hardy was at this time.

Persons with a bruised spirit, a wounded heart, with weakened understanding, misled by false devotion, and deceived, moreover, by the recommendations of the most influential members of the priest party, were attracted hither; then insensibly isolated, sequestrated, and finally despoiled in this religious den, and all in the most holy way possible, and *ad majorem Dei gloriam*, according to the device of the honourable Society.

In Jesuitical slang, as we may see by the hypocritical prospectus destined for the worthy fold, the dupes of this humbug, these pious cut-throats call them generally:

"Holy asylums open to the souls aweary of the vain brawlings of the world."

Or else they were entitled:

"Calm retreats, in which the faithful, happily freed from the perishable attachments of this nether world, and the earthly ties of family, could at length alone with God work out effectually their own salvation," etc.

What is here stated and unfortunately proved by a thousand instances of unworthy inveigling effected in a great number of religious houses to the prejudice of

the families of many *pensionnaires*, — this we say stated, proved, admitted, and yet only let a right mind reproach the state for not watching with sufficient scrutiny these dangerous places, and then it is something to hear the cries of the priest party, the invocations to individual liberty, the desolations, the lamentations, in reference to the tyranny that seeks to oppress consciences.

Could it not be replied to this, that these singular pretensions viewed as legitimate, that the players at thimble-rig and roulette have as much right to invoke private liberty, and appeal against the decisions which have shut up their haunts of infamy? After all, we have thus abridged the liberty of the players, who come freely, joyously to engulf their patrimony in these dens; we have equally tyrannised over their conscience, which allowed them to lose in the turn of a card the last resources of their family.

Yes, we ask positively, sincerely, seriously, what difference there is between a man who ruins or despoils his family by playing *rouge et noir*, and the man who ruins or despoils his family in the doubtful hope of being a fortunate hunter at this game of hell or paradise, which certain priests have had the audacious sacrilege to invent, in order to constitute themselves croupiers?[1]

Nothing is more opposed to the real and divine spirit of Christianity than these barefaced spoliations. His repentance for sins, the practice of all Christian virtues, the devotion which endures suffering, the love of our

[1] The *Démocratie Pacifique* and the *National* have lately alluded to a captation (inveigling) done by the priests by abominable means. It was in an affair of inheritance of eight million francs (320,000*l.*), and will shortly come before the tribunals of France. A note has been forwarded to us, of which we guarantee the authenticity, but repress the real names.

M. ——, a very rich manufacturer possessing a factory, made a gift, before a notary of Paris, of a million francs (40,000*l.*), for a house of Jesuits, to be established at his death; children only to be admitted after proofs of the piety of their fathers and grandfathers. This act was with difficulty legalised, — the government even opposed it strongly, but the skill of the sons of Loyola obtained the ascendent. The reverend fathers so far abused the credulity of the donor that he seriously affirms that, but for a miracle which provided for the wants of the reverend fathers of the Rue des Postes, they must have died of hunger this winter. M. —— has some relations well off, but he has others who are living in honest poverty.

neighbour, which deserves heaven; and not a sum of money, larger or lesser, employed like a stake in the hopes of winning paradise, and swamped by priests who *santent la coupe*, and who trick weak minds by the aid of a very lucrative display of legerdemain.

Such then was the asylum of peace and innocence in which M. Hardy was.

He occupied the ground floor of a pavilion looking on to a part of the garden of the house. This apartment had been judiciously chosen, for we know the deep and diabolical skill with which the reverend fathers take advantage of the material means and appearances to effect a lively impression on the minds they are sapping and mining.

Let the reader imagine, as the sole perspective, an enormous wall of blackish gray, half overgrown with ivy, that plant of ruins; a dark alley of old yews, those trees of the tombs, with their sepulchral verdure, one end of which terminated with one side of this sombre wall, and the other at a small semicircle in front of the chamber usually inhabitated by M. Hardy. Two or three mounds of earth, planted with box symmetrically cut, completed the beauty of this garden, which was in all points similar to those which surround places of interment.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon, and, although it was a fine, sunny day in April, the sunbeams, excluded by the height of the wall we have mentioned, only penetrated into this part of the garden, which was dark, damp, and cold as a cavern, and on to which opened the chamber of M. Hardy.

This apartment was furnished with a perfect knowledge of the comfortable; a soft carpet covered the floor, thick curtains of dark green cloth, of the same hue as the panels, hung over an excellent bed, and a window that looked into the garden. Some mahogany furniture, very plain, but bright with cleanliness, decorated the room. About the *secrétaire*, and in front of the bed was

a large figure of Christ in ivory, in a black velvet curtain. The mantelpiece was ornamented with a clock of ebony, with mournful emblems, encrusted in ivory, such as hour-glasses, times' scythes, deaths'-heads, etc.

Now, then, let us visit this picture with a gloomy twilight, — let us think that this solitude was incessantly plunged in gloomy silence, interrupted only at the hours of prayer by the lugubrious tinkling of the bells of the chapel of the reverend fathers, and we shall own to the infernal skill with which these dangerous priests know how to take advantage of exterior objects, as they might desire to make an impression one way or the other on the minds of those whom they wish to inveigle. This was not all. After having thus addressed the eyes, it was necessary to address the understanding.

And in this way had the reverend fathers proceeded.

One single book — one only — was left as if by accident at the control of M. Hardy.

This book was the "Imitation." But, as it might chance that M. Hardy had not the courage or wish to peruse this volume, thoughts, reflections, borrowed from this work of pitiless desolation, and written in very large characters, were placed in black frames, and hung up either in the interior of the recess in which the bed was placed, or against the panels most in sight; so that, involuntarily, and in the sad leisure of his depressing inactivity, his eyes became almost perforce attracted towards them.

Some quotations of the maxims, with which the reverend fathers thus encircled their victim, are necessary that we may see into what fatal and desperate circle they had circumscribed the weakened mind of this unfortunate man, who had been prostrated by such bitter sufferings.[1]

[1] We find what follows in the "Directorium" in reference to the means to be employed, in order to attract into the Company of Jesus those persons whom they wish to get hold of:

"To attract any person into the society, it is requisite not to be too much

What he read mechanically at each moment of the day and night, when

"Gentle sleep, Nature's soft nurse,"

forsook his eyelids, red with tears, was as follows:[1]

"He is very vain who places his hope in men or in any creature that is."

"It will soon be all over with you here below. In what state are you?"

"The man who is alive to-day will not appear to-morrow; and when he has disappeared from our eyes, he is soon effaced from our thoughts."

"When the morning comes, reflect that perhaps you will not see the evening."

"When the evening comes, be not too confident that you will see the morning."

"Who will remember you when you are dead?"

"Who will pray for you?"

"You deceive yourself if you expect anything but suffering."

"All this mortal life is full of miseries and environed by crosses. Bear these crosses, chastise and subject your body, despise yourself, and desire to be despised by others."

"Be persuaded that your life must be a continual death."

"The more a man dies to himself, the more he begins to live to God."

It is not sufficient thus to plunge the soul of the victim in incurable despair by the aid of these maxims, which must prey on the mind, but it is also necessary to mould

in haste, but await some good opportunity; for instance, when the person experiences a violent grief, or has been entangled in some misfortunes; even vices present good opportunities for this." See, on this subject, the excellent Commentaries of M. Dezamy, on the Constitutions of the Jesuits, in his work of "*Jesuitisme varnie par le Soualisme*," Paris, 1845.

[1] We need scarcely add, that these passages are from the text of the "Imitation" (translation and preface of the Reverend Père Genelien).

it to the corpse-like obedience of the Society of Jesus, and thus the reverend fathers had judiciously chosen some other passages of the "Imitation" for we find in this terrifying book a thousand alarms to intimidate weak minds, a thousand slavish maxims to enchain and subject the pusillanimous spirit.

We thus read again:

"It is a great gain to live in obedience, to have a superior, and not to be master of one's own actions."

"It is much more safe to obey than to command."

"It is best to depend on God only, in the person of the superiors who represent him."

And, if it were not enough, after having urged to despair and terrified the victim, after having deprived him of every liberty, after having reduced him to a blind and brutish obedience, after having persuaded him, with the incredible cynicism of clerical pride, that to submit himself passively to the first priest that comes was to submit himself to God himself, it was necessary to retain the victim in the house in which they desired to rivet his fetters for ever.

Thus we also read amongst the maxims:

"Turn to one side or to the other, and you will not find any repose but in submitting yourself humbly to the guide of a superior."

"Many persons have been deceived by the hope of being better elsewhere, and by a desire to change."

The reader will now imagine M. Hardy conveyed wounded to this house, with his heart torn, lacerated by bitterest agonies, by horrible treachery, bleeding even more copiously than his bodily wounds.

Most carefully attended to and nursed, thanks to the recognised skill of Doctor Baleinier, M. Hardy was soon cured of the wounds he had received through rushing into the midst of the flames to which his factory was a prey.

Still, in order to favour the projects of the reverend

fathers, a certain medicament, harmless in itself, but still capable of acting on the mind, and often employed, as we are told, by the reverend doctor under other important circumstances, had been administered to M. Hardy, and had kept him for some time in a kind of dreamy thoughtfulness.

For a mind crushed by atrocious deceptions, it is in appearance an inestimable benefit to be plunged in that torpor, which at least prevents recurrence to a past of despair. M. Hardy, resigning himself to this deep apathy, arrived insensibly at a state which made him consider this abstraction of thought as the most heavenly good. Thus those unhappy persons who are tortured with cruel maladies accept with gratitude the opiate draught, which slowly kills, but which at least puts suffering to sleep.

When we sketched the portrait of M. Hardy, we endeavoured to display the exquisite delicacy of his mind, his painful susceptibility with respect to all that was low and vile, his extreme goodness, rectitude, and generosity.

We recall those admirable qualities because we prove in his case, as with almost all thus endowed, they are not allied — cannot be allied — with energetic and resolute character. Of inflexible perseverance in good, the conduct of this man was effective, irresistible, but it did not carry due weight withal. It was not with the rude energy, the somewhat fierce will peculiar to other men with great and noble hearts, that M. Hardy had realised the prodigies of his *maison commune*, but by dint of kind persuasion, with him the *suaviter in modo* supplied the *fortiter in re*. At the sight of a baseness, an injustice, he did not revolt, irritated and menacing — he suffered; he did not assail the offender body to body, but turned his gaze from him with bitterness and sorrow. And then, especially, this loving heart, of such feminine delicacy, had an irresistible desire of the wholesome

contact of the dearest affection of the soul; they alone gave life and animation to him. Thus a poor and delicate bird dies frozen when it can no longer nestle amidst its brothers and sisters, and receive from them as they receive from it that gentle warmth which is diffused amongst them all in the maternal nest.

And then behold this too sensitive organisation of such refined susceptibility struck blow by blow with deceptions; by griefs, one of which would suffice, if not entirely to crush, at least most deeply to shake, the mind of firmest temper.

M. Hardy's dearest friend behaved to him in an infamous manner.

An adored mistress forsook him.

The house he had founded for the happiness of his workmen, whom he loved as brethren, was nothing now but ashes — ruins.

What then ensues? All the springs of his soul are broken.

Too weak to stand up against so many fearful shocks; too cruelly disabused by treachery to seek fresh affections; too much discouraged to think of relaying the first stone of a new *maison commune*, — this poor heart, isolated besides from all salutary contact, seeks forgetfulness of all and of itself in an overwhelming torpor.

If still some instincts of life and affection seek to display themselves at long intervals, and, half opening the eyes of the mind which he keeps closed that he may neither see the present, nor the past, nor the future, M. Hardy looks about him, what finds he? These sentences, imprinted in characters of the deepest despair:

"You are but dust and ashes;" "You were born to grief and tears;" "Believe in nothing upon earth;" "There are neither relatives nor friends;" "All affections are deceitful;" "Die this morning, you will be forgotten before night;" "Humble yourself — despise yourself — be despised by others;" "Do not think, do

not reason, do not see, confide your sad fate to the hands of a superior, he will think and reason for you;" "Weep — suffer — think of death;" "Yes, death — always death — that is the termination, the end of all your thoughts, if you think, but it is better not to think;" "Have no feeling but that of incessant anguish, that is all that is requisite to gain heaven;" "We are only welcome to the terrible, implacable God whom we adore by our miseries and tortures."

These were the consolations offered to this unfortunate. Thus alarmed, he shut his eyes, and relapsed into his gloomy lethargy.

To leave this sombre *maison de retraite* he was unable, or, rather, he was unwilling. The will was lacking; and then, it must be said, he had at least accustomed himself to this residence, and even to like it, — they took such care of him, left him so much alone with his sorrow; there reigned in the house the silence of the tomb, so accordant with the silence of his heart, which was but a tomb in which lay buried his last love, his last friendship, his last hopes of the future for the labouring classes! All energy was dead within him.

Then he began to undergo a slow but inevitable transformation, so judiciously foreseen by Rodin, who directed this machination in its minutest details. M. Hardy, at first affrighted at the sinister maxims with which he was surrounded, had gradually accustomed himself to read them almost mechanically — as a prisoner counts during his sad idleness the nails of his prison door or the gratings of his cell. This was a great point gained for the reverend fathers. His spirit, thus weakened, was next struck at the apparent justice of some of these lying and distressing aphorisms. Thus he read:

"We must not rely on the affection of any creature on earth," — and he had indeed been infamously treated. "Man was born to live to desolation," — and in desolation he lived. "There is no repose but in the abnegation

of thought," — and the sleep of his mind alone brought truce to his sufferings.

Two openings skilfully contrived, beneath the hangings and in the panels of the chambers of this house, enabled the fathers at all times to see or hear their boarders, and especially to observe their physiognomy and habits, and all those details which tell so much when a man believes himself alone.

Some exclamations of misery which escaped M. Hardy in his gloomy solitude were brought to Père d'Aigrigny by a mysterious watcher. The reverend father having scrupulously followed the instructions of Rodin, had not at first visited his boarder very frequently. It has been already said that the Père d'Aigrigny, when he pleased, could display a charm of seduction almost irresistible, and uniting in his interviews a tact and reserve full of address, he only presented himself occasionally to inquire after M. Hardy's health. But soon the reverend father, warned by his spy and aided by his own natural sagacity, saw all the advantages he could extract from the physical and moral weakness of his boarder; and, certain beforehand that he would not give way to his persuasions, he spake to him several times of the dullness of the house, urging him affectionately either to quit the house if the monotony of the life he led oppressed him, or to seek at least outside the walls some amusements — some pleasures.

In the state in which this unfortunate man was, to speak to him of amusements and pleasures was sufficient to ensure a refusal, and so it occurred. The Père d'Aigrigny did not at first attempt to surprise the confidence of M. Hardy, and said not a word to him of his sorrows; but each time he saw him he seemed to evince a tender interest, expressed in a few simple words, deeply penetrating. Gradually these conversations, at first rare, became frequent and longer. Endued with insinuating and persuasive eloquence, the Père d'Aigrigny naturally

took for his theme the mournful maxims on which the thought of M. Hardy was so frequently fixed.

Plastic, prudent, skilful; knowing that until then M. Hardy had professed that generous natural religion which preaches a grateful adoration for God, a love of human kind, a worship of the just and good, and who, disdaining dogmas, professed the same veneration of Marcus Aurelius as for Confucius, for Moses as Lycurgus, the Père d'Aigrigny did not at first attempt to convert M. Hardy, but commenced by incessantly recalling to the mind of this unfortunate gentleman, in whom he wished to destroy all hope, the abominable deceptions by which he had suffered. Instead of pointing out to him these treacheries as the exceptions in life; instead of trying to calm, to encourage, to reanimate this crushed spirit; instead of persuading M. Hardy to seek forgetfulness and consolation for his griefs in the accomplishment of duties towards humanity, his brethren whom he had so greatly loved and succoured, D'Aigrigny kept open the bleeding wounds of this unfortunate gentleman, and, depicting to him mankind under the most atrocious colours, as all cheats, ungrateful and villainous, he rendered his despair incurable.

This end attained, the Jesuit advanced another step. Knowing Hardy's excessive kindness of heart, he took advantage of the weakness of his mind by talking to him of the comfort there was for a man overwhelmed with desperate sorrows to believe firmly that each of his tears, so far from being profitless, was agreeable unto God, and would aid his fellow men in believing, as the reverend father skilfully added, that it was permitted to the faithful only to utilise his grief in favour of others wretched as himself, and thus render it sweet unto the Lord. All that is despairing and impious, all that conceals atrocious, politic Machiavelism in those detestable maxims which make of the Creator, so gloriously good and paternal, a pitiless God, incessantly desirous of the

tears of humanity, was thus skilfully kept from the eyes of M. Hardy, whose generous instincts still survived. Soon this tender and loving soul, whom these base priests urged to a sort of moral suicide, found a bitter delight in this fiction, — that, at least, his sorrows profited other men. It is true, at first, it was only a fiction, but a weakened spirit, which yields itself to such a fiction, admits it sooner or later as reality, and sooner or later submits to all its consequences.

Such, then, was the moral and physical state of M. Hardy when, by the intervention of a servant bribed, he had received a letter from Agricola Baudoin, requesting an interview. The day of this interview had arrived. Two or three hours before the time appointed for Agricola's visit D'Aigrigny entered Hardy's chamber.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE VISIT.

When Père d'Aigrigny entered the apartment M. Hardy was sitting in a large armchair; his attitude bespoke indescribable depression. Beside him was a draught prescribed by Doctor Baleinier. The fragile constitution of M. Hardy had been so rudely shattered by so many cruel blows that he seemed but the shadow of his former self. His pallid, attenuated countenance expressed at the moment a kind of gloomy tranquillity. In this short time his hair had become grizzled; his eyes, half closed, wandered around vaguely, and as if they had lost their "speculation;" his head was leaning against the back of the chair, and his wasted hands, coming from beneath the large sleeves of his brown morning gown, rested on the arms of the chairs.

D'Aigrigny had assumed as he approached his *pensionnaire* a look of benignity and regard, and the inflection of his voice had never been more insinuating.

"Well, my dear son," he said to Hardy, embracing him with hypocritical fondness (your Jesuits embrace very much), "how are you to-day?"

"Much as usual, father."

"Are you still satisfied with the attention of the people who wait upon you?"

"Yes, father."

"I trust, my dear son, that the repose you so much like has not been broken in upon?"

"No, I thank you."

"Your apartment still pleases you?"

"Still."

"You want for nothing?"

"Nothing, father."

"We are so happy to find that you are satisfied with our poor house, my dear son, that we would fain anticipate all your desires."

"I have no desire, father, for anything but sleep. Sleep is so comforting," added Hardy, his head quite confused.

"Sleep — is oblivion. And here below it is better to forget than to remember, for men are so ungrateful, so wicked, — but almost every recollection is bitter, is it not, my dear son?"

"Alas! what you say is but too true, father."

"I admire your pious resignation, my dear son. Oh, how agreeable is this constant mildness in affliction unto the Lord! Believe me, my dear son, your tears and your incessant grief are an offering which with the Lord will find acceptance for you and your fellow creatures. Yes, for man was only born to suffer in this world, to suffer with gratitude towards God who sends us our afflictions, — it is in truth to pray, and he who prayeth prayeth not only for himself, but for all human kind."

"May Heaven at least grant that my sufferings be not sterile. To suffer is to pray," repeated M. Hardy, speaking to himself as if reflecting on the idea. "To suffer is to pray, and to pray for all mankind — still it seemed to me in former times," he added, with an effort over himself, "that the destiny of man — "

"Continue, my dearest son, — say your whole thought," said D'Aigrigny, seeing that M. Hardy paused.

After a moment's hesitation the latter, who as he spoke had somewhat raised himself in his chair, fell back again discouraged and weary, as it were, and murmured:

"Of what use is it to think? It is wearying; and I do not feel my strength adequate."

"You speak rightly, my dear son; of what use is it to think? It is better to believe."

"Yes, father, it is better to believe, to suffer; above all, to forget — forget —!"

Hardy did not finish, but his head fell languidly back on the chair, and he covered his eyes with his hand.

"Alas! my dear son," said D'Aigrigny, with tears in his eyes, and this admirable actor went on his knees beside M. Hardy's chair, "alas! how could the friend who so infamously betrayed you mistake a heart like yours? But it is always so when we seek the affection of the creature instead of the Creator; and that unworthy friend —"

"Yes, for pity's sake do not talk to me of that treachery," said M. Hardy, interrupting D'Aigrigny, in an imploring tone.

"No; I will not think of it, my too susceptible son! Forget that perjured soul. Forget that wretch, whom sooner or later the vengeance of God will overtake, for he played with your noble confidence in a most odious manner. Forget, too, that unhappy woman whose crime was very great, for on your account she trampled under foot her sacred duties, and the Lord reserves for her a fearful punishment, and one day —"

Hardy again interrupted D'Aigrigny, saying with repressed emotion, but still most evident and bitter:

"It is too much; you do not know, father, the harm you do me; no, you do not know."

"Forgive me, oh, forgive me, my son! But alas! you see the mere remembrance of these earthly attachments still causes you at this moment a painful excitement; does not this prove to you that it is beyond this corrupt and corrupting world that we must seek for those consolations always assured to us?"

"Oh, shall I ever find them?" exclaimed the unhappy man, in bitter despair.

"Yes, you will find them, my good, my tender son," cried D'Aigrigny, with emotion admirably feigned, "can you doubt it? Oh, what a day for us will that be, when, having made further steps in that pious path of safety which you are digging out with your tears, all that which at this moment seems to you surrounded by certain darkness will light up with ineffable and divine lustre! Oh, what a holy day, what a happy day, when, the last ties which attach you to this foul and wicked world being destroyed, you will become one of us, and like us you will aspire only to eternal delights!"

"Yes — until death!"

"Say, rather, to the life immortal; to paradise, my dearest son; and you will have there a glorious place ascribed to you, — a place my paternal heart desires as fervently as it hopes for it; and your name will be found every day in all my prayers and those of our good fathers."

"I do at least what I can to attain this blind faith; this detaching from all things in which you assure me, father, that I shall at last find repose."

"My poor dear son, if your Christian modesty allowed you to compare what you were at the first of your coming here and what you now are, and that only through your sincere desire to have the faith, you would be astonished. What a difference! To your agitation, your despairing groans, has succeeded a pious calmness. Is it not so?"

"Yes, it is true; at times when I have suffered very much, my heart does not beat, I am calm, — so are the dead; they are calm, too," said M. Hardy, letting his head fall on his breast.

"Ah, my dear son, my dear son, you break my heart when I sometimes hear you speak thus. I am always

afraid that you regret your worldly life, so fruitful in abominable deceptions. But this very day you will fortunately have to undergo a decisive trial on this point."

"In what way, father?"

"That worthy artisan, one of the best workmen in your factory, is to come and see you."

"Ah, yes," said M. Hardy, after a minute's reflection; for his memory, as well as his mind, was greatly weakened. "Yes, Agricola is coming. I think I shall have much pleasure in seeing him."

"Well, then, my dear son, your interview with him will be the proof of what I say. The presence of this worthy fellow will recall to you the active, busy life you once led. Perchance, these recollections will make you regret the pious repose you now enjoy; perchance, you will again desire to dash into a career full of all sorts of emotions, form new friendships, seek fresh affections, in fact, revive, as in other times, a bustling, noisy existence. Should these ideas awaken in you, you will not be ripe for this retreat; obey them, then, my dear son; seek again pleasures, enjoyments, fêtes; my warmest wishes will always follow you, even in the midst of this mundane tumult; but recollect too, my beloved son, that if, one day, your soul should again be torn by fresh treacheries, this peaceable asylum will be always open, and you will always find one ready to weep with you at the dolorous vanities of human things."

As D'Aigrigny spoke, Hardy had listened almost with affright. At the mere thought of again throwing himself into the midst of the torments of a life so painfully distressing, this poor soul had recoiled, trembling and overpowered; and he exclaimed, with an almost imploring tone:

"I, my father? I, return to a world in which I have so greatly suffered, where I have left my last illusion? I, mix with its fêtes, its pleasures? Ah, this is, indeed, cruel raillery!"

"It is not raillery, my dear son. It is to be expected that the sight, the words of this loyal artisan will awaken in you ideas, which, at this moment, you think for ever destroyed. In this case, my dear son, try once more a mundane life. Will not this retreat be always open to you after fresh griefs, fresh sorrows?"

"And, for what, and why, should I expose myself to fresh sufferings?" cried Hardy, in an agony of mind. "I can scarcely support those I now endure. Oh, never, never! Oblivion of all, everything, — the nothingness of the tomb, until the tomb. This is all I henceforth desire."

"So you think, my dear son, because no voice from without these walls has hitherto come to trouble your tranquil solitude, or awaken those holy hopes which suggest to you that beyond the tomb you will be with the Lord. But this workman, thinking less of your safety than his own interest, and the interest of his family, will come."

"Alas, my father!" said Hardy, interrupting the Jesuit, "I have been happy enough to be able to create for my work-people all that, humanly speaking, an honest man can do; fate has not allowed me to continue this any longer. I have paid my debt to humanity; my powers are exhausted; and, henceforth, I seek nothing but forgetfulness — rest. Is it, then, too much to require?" exclaimed the unhappy man, with an unutterable gesture of weariness and despair.

"Unquestionably, my dear and excellent son, your generosity has been unequalled; but it is in the very name of this generosity that this artisan is coming to impose fresh sacrifices on you. Yes; for, with hearts like yours, the past is an obligation, and it will be almost impossible for you to resist the entreaties of your work-people. You will be compelled to renew your incessant activity, in order to raise again an edifice from its ruins, to recommence founding to-day that which, twenty years

ago, you founded in all the strength and ardour of youth; to renew those commercial relations in which your scrupulous honesty has been so often wounded; to resume those chains of all sorts, which bind the great manufacturer to a life of disquietude and labour, but also, to what compensations! In a few years, you will reach, by dint of incessant toil, the same point at which you were when this terrible catastrophe occurred; and then, too, what ought to encourage you still more is, that at least, during these rude labours, you will not be as you were formerly, the dupe of an unworthy friend, whose false regard appeared to you so delightful, and added such a charm to your existence. You will not have again to reproach yourself with an adulterous liaison, in which you believed that you each day found fresh strength, new encouragement to do well, as if, alas! that which is culpable can ever have a happy termination. No, no! Having reached the decline of your career; the enchantment of friendship broken; recognising the nothingness of guilty passion; alone, always alone, you go boldly again to face the storms of life. Doubtless, on quitting this calm and pious asylum, where no noise troubles your tranquillity, your repose, the contrast will at first be great; but even this contrast — "

"Enough; oh, for mercy's sake, enough!" exclaimed M. Hardy, interrupting the abbé in a faint voice. "When I only hear you speak of the agitation of such a life, my father, I experience the most torturing feelings, which my head can scarcely withstand. Oh, no; quiet, quiet before everything! Yes, I repeat, even though it should be the quiet of the grave."

"But then how will you resist the urgent entreaties of the young artisan? The obliged have rights over the benefactors, — you will be unable to resist his entreaties."

"Well then, my father, if it be necessary, I will not see him. I have anticipated a kind of pleasure

in this interview, but now I feel it will be wiser to refuse it."

"But he will not consent; he will insist on seeing you."

"You will be so kind, my father, to send him word that I am very ill, that it is impossible for me to see him."

"Listen, my dear son. In our times there exist great, unhappy prejudices against the poor servants of Christ; and although you have voluntarily remained amongst us after having been brought accidentally and in a dying state into this house, yet, seeing you refuse an interview which in the first instance you had granted, it might be supposed that you were subjected to restraint, and, however absurd that suspicion might be, it might arise; and we should be sorry that it was accredited. It will be better, therefore, to receive the young artisan."

"Father, what you require of me is beyond my strength; at this moment I feel quite overcome; this conversation has exhausted me."

"But, my dear son, the young workman will come, and when I tell him you will not receive him, he will not believe me."

"Why, father — have pity on me! I assure you it is impossible for me to see anybody, I suffer too severely."

"Well, then, let us see; let us seek some means. If you write to him, they will give him your letter when he comes; you can give him another meeting — say to-morrow."

"Neither to-morrow, or ever," exclaimed the unhappy man, urged to extremity, "I will not see any one. I wish to be alone — always alone; that does not hurt anyone, and may not that liberty at least be granted to me?"

"Compose yourself, my son; follow my advice, do not see this good lad to-day, since you dread the meeting;

but do not say you never will — to-morrow you may change your mind. So let your refusal be vague."

"As you will, father."

"But, although it is not yet near the hour when this workman is expected," said the reverend father, "it will be as well to write at once."

"I have not strength enough, father."

"Try."

"Impossible; I feel myself too weak."

"Come, a little courage," said the reverend father; and he took from a desk writing materials, placed a sheet of paper and a blotting book on Hardy's knees, and held the inkstand open, which he presented to him.

"I assure you, father, I cannot write," said Hardy, in a faint voice.

"Only a few words," replied D'Aigrigny, with pitiless pertinacity, and placing the pen between Hardy's inert fingers.

"Alas! father, my sight is so dim that I can no longer see."

And the unhappy man said truly. His eyes were filled with tears, so bitter were the sensations which the Jesuit's language had excited in him.

"Be composed, my son, I will guide your dear hand, only dictate."

"Father, I beg you will write, and I will sign."

"No, my dear son, for a thousand reasons it is requisite that it should be all written with your own hand; a few lines are sufficient."

"But, my father —"

"Come, it must be so, or I must admit the workman," said D'Aigrigny, dryly, seeing by the growing weakness of Hardy's mind that he might at a moment so important use firmness which might be recompensed by a milder demeanour subsequently. As he spoke, he bent his large, gray, round, and sparkling eyes on Hardy with a stern

look. The poor wretch shuddered under this look of almost fascination, and replied with a sigh:

"I will write, father, I will write; but I beseech you dictate, my head is too weak," said Hardy, wiping away his tears with his burning and feverish hand."

D'Aigrigny dictated the following lines:

"'My dear Agricola,—I have reflected that an interview with you will be useless; it would only serve to awaken bitter griefs which I have been able to forget with God's help, and those soft consolations which religion offers to me—'"

The reverend father paused for a moment. Hardy was even paler, and his weak hand could scarcely hold the pen; his forehead was bathed with a cold sweat. D'Aigrigny drew out his pocket-handkerchief, and, wiping his victim's face, said, with a return of affectionate solicitude:

"Come, come, my dear and beloved son, courage! It was not I, you know, who begged you to decline this interview, was it? No, on the contrary; but since, for your repose, you desire to postpone it, try and finish the letter, for what, after all, is it that I desire? Why, to see you henceforward enjoy an ineffable and religious calm, after so many painful agitations."

"Yes, my father, I know it, you are very good," said poor Hardy, in a grateful voice, "excuse my weakness."

"Can you go on with this letter, my dear son?"

"Yes, father."

"Then write;" and the reverend father continued his dictation.

"'I enjoy undisturbed tranquillity, I am surrounded with care, and, thanks to the divine mercy, I hope to make a perfectly Christian end far from a world whose vanities I now see through. I do not say adieu, but that we shall soon meet, my dear Agricola; for I wish to tell you yourself of the wishes I form, and always must entertain, for you and your worthy comrades. Be

my interpreter with them, and as soon as I find it convenient to receive you I will write; until then believe me always your very affectionate friend —'"

Then the reverend father said to M. Hardy:

"Do you think this will do, my dear son?"

"Yes, father."

"Sign it, then."

"Yes, father."

And the miserable man, after having signed it, fell back on his armchair, utterly exhausted.

"This is not all, my dear son," added D'Aigrigny, drawing a paper from his pocket. "You must have the kindness again to sign this fresh favour granted by you to our reverend fathers' *procureur* to terminate the affairs you know of."

"Oh, Heaven, again!" exclaimed Hardy, with a kind of feverish and diseased impatience. "But you see plainly, my father, my strength is quite gone."

"You have only to sign after you have read it, my dear son," and D'Aigrigny presented to M. Hardy a large sheet of stamped paper filled with writing which was almost undecipherable.

"Father, indeed I cannot read it to-day."

"But you must, my dear son; forgive my pressing this on you, but we are very poor, and —"

"I will sign, father."

"But you must read what you sign, my son."

"Wherefore? Give it me — give it me," said M. Hardy, harassed as he was by the inflexible obstinacy of D'Aigrigny.

"Since you will have it so, my dear son," said the wily priest, presenting the paper. Hardy signed, and fell back almost fainting.

At this moment a servant entered, after having knocked at the door, and said to the reverend father:

"M. Agricola Baudoin desires to speak to M. Hardy, with whom he says he has an appointment."

"Very well, desire him to wait," replied D'Aigrigny, as much vexed as surprised, and making a sign to the servant to withdraw. Then concealing the annoyance he felt, he said to M. Hardy:

"This worthy artisan is in haste to see you, my dear son; he is two hours before the appointed hour; there is still time, will you see him?"

"Why, my dear father," replied Hardy, with a kind of painful irritation, "you see how weak I am; pray have pity on me. I entreat you let me be calm — I repeat, although it were to be the calm of the tomb; but, for the love of heaven, calm!"

"One day you will enjoy the eternal peace of the elect, my dearest son," said D'Aigrigny, with emotion, "for your tears and misery are agreeable to the Lord;" so saying, he left the room.

M. Hardy, left alone, clasped his hands in despair, and, bursting into tears, exclaimed, as he glided out of his armchair on his knees:

"Oh, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* Take me from this world; I am too miserable."

Then bending his brow to the seat of his armchair, he concealed his face in his hands, and wept bitterly. Suddenly there was a noise of voices, which grew louder; then a kind of struggle, and then the door of the apartment opened, violently driven in by D'Aigrigny, who came in backwards, stumbling several paces. Agricola had thrust him forward with a vigorous hand.

"Sir, dare you use force and violence?" exclaimed D'Aigrigny, pale with rage.

"I will dare anything to see M. Hardy," was the smith's reply. And he rushed towards his old master, whom he saw on his knees in the middle of the chamber.

END OF VOLUME V.

PART XI. — CONTINUED

THE CHOLERA

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THE WANDERING JEW.

CHAPTER I.

AGRICOLA BAUDOIN.

THE Père d'Aigrigny could scarcely repress his spite and rage, and cast not only angry and threatening looks at Agricola, but from time to time glanced with unquiet and irritated eye at the entrance of the door, as if he feared at each moment to see some other person enter whose coming he equally dreaded.

The smith, as soon as he saw the countenance of his master, retreated, struck with painful surprise at the sight of M. Hardy's features, so sad, so grief-worn. For some seconds the three actors in this scene kept silence. Agricola had no longer any doubt as to the moral weakening of M. Hardy, accustomed as the artisan was to see as much high spirit as kindness of heart in the worthy man.

D'Aigrigny first broke silence, saying to the boarder, and laying decided emphasis on each word:

"I should suppose, my dear son, that after the desire so positive, so spontaneous, which you have just manifested to me, not to see this gentleman, — I should suppose, I say, that his presence now is painful to you; and I trust, therefore, that out of deference, or at least grati-

tude, to you, this gentleman," and he looked towards the smith, "will at once retire, and terminate this unpleasant situation, already too much prolonged."

Agricola made no reply to Père d'Aigrigny, but, turning his back to him, addressed M. Hardy, whom he gazed at for some moments with profound emotion, whilst the big tears fell from his eyes:

"Ah, monsieur, it does me good to see you, although you appear to be suffering so much! How my heart grows calm, is reassured, rejoices; my comrades would be so happy to be in my place. If you but knew all they have said to me about you; for to cherish, venerate you, we all have but one soul, one feeling."

D'Aigrigny gave Hardy a glance which meant—What did I tell you? Then addressing Agricola impatiently, as he went up close to him:

"I have already told you that your presence here is intrusive."

Agricola made no reply, did not even turn towards him, but said:

"M. Hardy, have the goodness to desire this person to leave the room. My father and I know him, as he knows full well."

Then turning around towards the reverend father, the smith added, scornfully, and measuring him from head to foot with a look of indignation mingled with disgust:

"If you have any desire to hear what I have to say to M. Hardy about you, return here by and by; but at present I wish to speak to my late employer on private business, and give him a letter from Mlle. de Cardoville, who knows you also, unfortunately for her."

The Jesuit remained unmoved, and replied:

"I will allow myself, sir, to think you somewhat invert our positions. I am here in my own house, where I have the honour to receive M. Hardy. It is I, therefore, who have the right and power to compel you to quit this place instantly, and—"

"Father, pray," said M. Hardy, with deference, "excuse Agricola; his attachment to me urges him somewhat too far; but as he is here, and has private matters to communicate to me, allow me, father, to converse with him for a little while."

"Allow you, my dear son?" replied D'Aigrigny, pretending surprise, "why ask permission? Are you not perfectly free to do what you think best? Was it not you who just now, and in spite of my observations begging you to receive this individual, formally and decidedly refused to grant him the interview?"

"Quite true, father."

After these words, D'Aigrigny could no longer resist without want of tact, and he rose, therefore, and, squeezing Hardy by the hand, said to him, with an expressive gesture:

"Adieu, for the present, my dear son, but remember our recent conversation, and what I foretold."

"Adieu, for the present, father; make your mind easy," replied M. Hardy, in a melancholy tone.

The reverend father left the room. Agricola, overcome, amazed, asked himself if it were indeed his former master whom he heard calling the Père d'Aigrigny father with so much deference and humility. Then as the smith scrutinised the features of M. Hardy more attentively, he remarked in his wasted countenance an expression of exhaustion and lassitude, which equally alarmed and affected him, and he therefore said to him, whilst endeavouring to conceal his painful surprise:

"At length, sir, you will be restored to us; we shall then soon see you in the midst of us! Ah, your return will make many very happy, relieve much uneasiness; for, if it were possible, we have loved you still more since we were afraid for an instant that we should lose you."

"Honest, worthy fellow!" replied M. Hardy, with a benevolent but melancholy smile, and holding out

his hand to Agricola, "I never for a moment doubted you or your comrades; their gratitude has always repaid me for the good I was enabled to do them."

"And which you will do them again, sir, — for you —"

Here M. Hardy interrupted Agricola by exclaiming:

"Before we continue this observation, my worthy young friend, you must allow me to speak with perfect frankness, so as to prevent yourself or your companions from entertaining hopes that can never be realised. My resolution is irrevocably taken to pass the remainder of my days if not within the walls of a cloister, at least in absolute retirement; for my soul sickens and is weary — oh, how weary of this life!"

"But we are not weary of honouring and cherishing the warmest affection for you, my beloved master!" exclaimed the smith, more and more alarmed by the tone and language of M. Hardy. "It is now our turn to devote ourselves to you, and to prove our sincerity by our zeal, our disinterested services, and our unanimous and energetic aid, in rebuilding the manufactory, — that monument of your generous goodness and noble desire to befriend your fellow creatures."

M. Hardy mournfully shook his head.

"No," said he, "I repeat that the activity of life has ceased for me; I seem, during the last few weeks, to have grown at least twenty years older, and I have neither the strength, the courage, nor even the inclination, to recommence my past career. Thank God, while I was able I did what I could for the interests of humanity. I have discharged my debt of social duty, and at this moment I have but one wish, one desire, and that is, to obtain peace and tranquillity from the consolations of religion."

"And can you possibly, sir," inquired Agricola, with utter amazement at these words, "can you prefer living in this gloomy solitude to being among your own faithful

and attached people? Do you believe you should find greater happiness here, amid these priests, than in your manufactory raised from its present ruins, and become more flourishing than ever?"

"Happiness and I have for ever parted company upon this earth," replied M. Hardy, bitterly.

After a momentary hesitation, Agricola quickly resumed, in an agitated and unsteady voice:

"My honoured master, you are basely deceived, cheated, duped!"

"What mean you, my friend?"

"I mean, M. Hardy, that the priests who surround you are false and treacherous, and that they have the blackest designs upon you. Oh, master, dear master, you little know the wicked hands you have fallen into! Are you aware with whom you are living?"

"Yes, with good and holy men, belonging to the Company of Jesus."

"And your mortal enemies!"

"Enemies?" cried M. Hardy, with a faint smile of mournful impatience, "what have I to fear further from the enmity of my most implacable foes? Where could they find the means of inflicting any fresh wound?"

"But, monsieur," exclaimed the smith, "it is not personal danger you need fear from the machinations of these religious hypocrites. Their motive consists in endeavouring to dispossess you of your share in an immense inheritance, and they have laid their plans with consummate villainy. Not only yourself, but the daughters of Maréchal Simon, Mlle. de Cardoville, and my adopted brother, Gabriel, — in a word, all belonging to your family have narrowly escaped becoming victims to their infernal schemes. I tell you, these priests have no other aim than to abuse your confidence, and that now their sole motive in causing you to be transported hither half dying as you were, and the reason why they wish to keep all your faithful friends from seeing you —"

And M. Hardy again broke in upon Agricola's discourse:

"My worthy young friend," said he, with a smile of gloomy indifference, "you are in error as to these pious priests, whose care and attention to me have been unceasingly great; and as to this pretended inheritance, what are all the riches of the world to me? Oh, no, henceforward the vain treasures of this valley of grief and tears have no charms, no temptations for me. I bow my spirit to the dust, humbly trusting that my severe sufferings may be acceptable in the eyes of the Lord, and plead in my favour, that I may as quickly as possible be removed from the scene of my painful pilgrimage."

"Alas, dear master," urged Agricola, unable to believe the reality of what he heard, "you cannot be thus changed in so short a time! You, to adopt such despairing sentiments, who ever bade us love and admire the inexhaustible goodness of our Heavenly Father; and well might we believe in the bounty, and love, and mercy you spoke of, for had not that beneficent Protector and ever watchful Guardian sent you to dwell among us?"

"And the greater is it my duty to resign myself to his will, since he has thought proper to withdraw me from you, my friends; doubtless because, spite of my wish to serve him aright, I have failed in so doing. I fear me much I have worshipped and loved the creature more than the Creator."

"And how, dear master," cried the smith, into whose heart fresh apprehensions as regarded the state of M. Hardy's mind were rapidly gaining ground, "could you better serve and honour God than by encouraging industry and honesty; rendering men better by securing their welfare; treating your dependants as men and brothers, by cultivating their understanding, and giving them a taste for virtue and real love for goodness; by propagating among them, by your example, senti-

ments of equality, brotherhood, and to share all things in common with a heavenly spirit. Ah, master, you need but to remember the good you have done, — the daily blessings breathed for you by the small world of whom you were the sun, that bestowed the life and light of happiness and content, to find consolation for the past and hope for the future!"

"Why recall the past?" replied M. Hardy, gently. "Had my humble deeds been acceptable in the sight of God, would he have punished me thus? Far from rejoicing in or vaunting of what I have done, I ought, rather, to lament and bewail in sackcloth and ashes; for I much fear I walked in darkness and error, and had wandered from his sacred fold; perhaps I was led to think my path a right one, and allowed myself to be blinded by my foolish pride. I, a poor, unworthy worm, to presume to differ from the many great and clever men who have humbly bowed themselves in submission to the strict forms I dared to consider unnecessary. Ah, now I feel my crime! I am conscious of my sin, and, with tears and prayers, in solitude and mortifications, will I endeavour to wash away my fault. Yes, I will humbly trust that an avenging God will yet one day grant me his pardon, and that my bitter sufferings may even be accepted in favour of other sinners great as myself."

Agricola found not one word to reply, but contemplated M. Hardy with mute alarm, as he continued to pour forth these melancholy, though hackneyed expressions, in a feeble and tremulous tone; and as he examined the dejected, careworn countenance of the man once so animated and energetic, he asked himself, with secret dread, what could be the mysterious influence, the fascination possessed by these priests, by which they were enabled to turn the sorrows and mental exhaustion of this unfortunate individual to their own purpose, and to dry and parch up one of the finest, noblest hearts that ever beat in human breast; to render barren and unpro-

ductive a beneficence that knew no bounds, and to annihilate a mind the most enlightened that had ever devoted itself to the happiness of the human race.

So great was the chagrin and astonishment of the smith, that he felt neither strength nor courage to continue the conversation, which became so much the more afflicting to him as at each fresh word and look from M. Hardy he saw more clearly revealed the depth of the abyss of incurable desolation into which the reverend fathers had plunged his unhappy patron.

M. Hardy, meanwhile, preserved a gloomy silence; he had fallen back into his original apathy and listless manner, while his eyes wandered to the various maxims inscribed on the walls relative to the "Imitation."

At length, Agricola broke the dead silence which prevailed, and drawing from his pocket the letter of Mlle. de Cardoville, which now formed his only hope, he presented it to M. Hardy, saying:

"Monsieur, a relation, at present unknown to you, except by name, which you have doubtless heard, has desired me to give you this letter."

"And what good can that letter do me, or indeed any one, my young friend?"

"Nay, master, I beseech of you to read it. Mlle. de Cardoville eagerly expects your reply. It refers to most important matters."

"My friend," replied M. Hardy, raising towards heaven his eyes red and swollen with weeping, "I know but of one important matter, and it is there!" pointing upwards.

"M. Hardy," continued the smith, more and more affected, "I beseech you, in the name of our united gratitude towards you, in that of the prayers we will teach our children night and morning to offer for your return to health and happiness, to read this letter. Yes, master, dear, dear master, I implore of you to read it; and if, after that, your mind continues unchanged,

why — then — why then — I will urge you no more; all will be at an end for us poor workmen; we shall have lost our benefactor for ever; he who treated us like brothers, and cherished us like friends; whose good example would, sooner or later, have been followed by others having hearts as noble and generous as his own, so that, by your intervention, by degrees our working brethren would have shared our blessings, and have had to bless your name as we did. But it matters not! To us, your faithful, your devoted workmen, your memory will be our most sacred treasure, and never will your name escape our lips but with love and respect, mingled with a grief that will not be consoled, for how can we forget that we have lost you?"

The voice of Agricola, which had been greatly interrupted by his rising emotions, was here lost amid the sighs and tears which, spite of his firm and manly character, he found it impossible to repress.

"Excuse my weakness, dearest master," said he, "but my tears fall not for myself alone. No, no, my heart bleeds when I think of those that will long be shed by brave and worthy men, as they mournfully repeat, 'We shall see our M. Hardy no more,—never — never again.'"

The emotion and tone of Agricola were so natural and unfeigned, his frank and noble countenance, bathed in tears, expressed so deep, so touching a devotion, that M. Hardy, for the first time during his abode among the reverend fathers, felt a something like warmth rekindle around his heart, as though some revivifying sunbeam had at length managed to pierce through the thick, icy covering beneath which he had so long vegetated.

M. Hardy held out his hand to Agricola, and said to him, in an altered voice:

"Thanks, my good friend, thanks. This fresh proof of your devotion, these regrets, all move me; and a gentle emotion, unembittered, does me good."

"Ah, sir," exclaimed the smith, with a glimmer of hope, "do not restrain yourself; listen to the voice of your heart; it will tell you to make the happiness of those who cherish you, and for you to see people happy is to be happy. Now, read this letter from the generous young lady; it may, perhaps, finish what I have begun, and if it does not, then we shall see."

So saying, Agricola paused, and cast a glance of hope towards the door; then he added, again presenting the letter to M. Hardy:

"Oh, sir, read, I entreat you; Mlle. de Cardoville has desired me to confirm to you all there is in the letter."

"No, no, I must not — I ought not to read it," replied Hardy, with hesitation. "Of what use would it be but to revive my regrets? For, alas! it is true I loved you all so much, I had formed so many projects for the future," added poor Hardy, with involuntary emotion; then struggling against the feeling, he continued, "But wherefore think of this? The past can never return."

"Who knows, M. Hardy, who knows?" observed Agricola, more and more satisfied at the doubt of his old master; "first read Mlle. de Cardoville's letter."

Hardy, yielding to Agricola's persuasion, took the letter almost in spite of himself, broke the seal, and read it; gradually his countenance expressed in turns gratitude and admiration. Several times he interrupted himself to say to Agricola, with a warmth of feeling which seemed to astonish even himself:

"Oh, how good, how admirable!"

Then having concluded the perusal of the letter, Hardy, addressing the smith, said, with a melancholy sigh:

"What a heart is Mlle. de Cardoville's! What kindness! What a mind! What elevation of mind! Ah, I shall never forget the noble feelings that have dictated her generous offers to me. May she at least be happy in this sad, sad world!"

"Ah, believe me, sir," replied Agricola, with excitement, "a world which comprises such creatures, and so many others beside, who, without having the inestimable worth of this excellent young lady, are yet worthy of the attachment of honest people, — such a world is something more than dirt, corruption, and wickedness, and proves, on the contrary, in favour of humanity. It is such a world that summons, awaits you. Come, M. Hardy, listen to the advice of Mlle. de Cardoville, accept the offers which she makes you; return to us; return to life; for it is death in this house!"

"Return to a world wherein I have suffered so much? Quit the calm of this retreat?" answered Hardy, with hesitation. "No, no, I cannot — I ought not."

"Ah, I have not relied on myself alone to decide you," cried the smith, with increasing hope, "I have there a powerful auxiliary" — he pointed to the door — "whom I have kept to strike the great blow, and who will appear when you please."

"What mean you, my friend?" inquired Hardy.

"Ah, it was another excellent idea of Mlle. de Cardoville, who always thinks rightly, knowing the dangerous hands into which you had fallen. Knowing, also, the perfidious cunning of those persons who desire to inveigle you, she said to me, 'M. Agricola, the disposition of M. Hardy is so frank and good that perhaps he will easily allow his mind to be abused, for honest hearts always refuse to believe in unworthy trickeries; then he may suppose that you are interested in having him accept the offers I make to him; but there is an individual whose sacred character ought under such circumstances to inspire M. Hardy with entire confidence; for this admirable priest is our relation, and was very nearly also a victim to the implacable enemies of our family.'"

"And this priest, who is he?" inquired Hardy.

"The Abbé Gabriel Rennepont, my adopted brother," cried the smith, with pride. "He is a noble priest!

Ah, sir, if you had known him earlier, instead of despairing, you would have hoped. Your grief would not have resisted his consolations."

"Who is this priest? Where is he?" inquired Hardy, equally surprised and curious.

"There — in your antechamber. When Père d'Aigrigny saw him with me, he became furious, and ordered us to go away; but my worthy, dear Gabriel replied that he might have to converse with you on very important interests, and that therefore he should stay. I, less patient, gave the Abbé d'Aigrigny, who sought to stop my progress, a push, and rushed by him, so anxious was I to see you. Now, sir, then you will receive Gabriel, will you not? He would not come in without your permission; I will now fetch him. You talk of religion; why, it is his that is the real one, for it does good, — it encourages, consoles, you will see, and then, at last, thanks to Mlle. de Cardoville and him, you will be restored to us!" exclaimed the smith, unable any longer to repress his joyful hope.

"No, my friend, no! I don't know. I am afraid," replied Hardy, with increasing hesitation, yet feeling, in spite of himself, aroused, animated, excited, by the cordial language of the smith. The latter, taking advantage of the propitious hesitation of his old master, ran to the door, opened it, and exclaimed:

"Gabriel, my brother, dear brother, come, come; M. Hardy wishes to see you."

"My friend," observed Hardy, still hesitating, but nevertheless seeming quite satisfied to have his hesitation taken advantage of, "my friend, what are you doing?"

"I am calling your preserver and our own!" replied Agricola, overjoyed, and certain of the good success of Gabriel's intervention with M. Hardy.

Appearing at the call of the smith, Gabriel quickly entered M. Hardy's apartment.

CHAPTER II.

THE HIDING-PLACE.

We have said that in certain parts of most of the apartments occupied by the boarders of the reverend fathers certain spy-holes were formed, with the intention of giving every facility to the incessant espionage with which the Company environed those they desired to watch; and M. Hardy being one of these, there had been contrived, adjacent to his apartment, a secret hiding-place which could hold two persons. A kind of long funnel aired and lighted up this closet, in which was a speaking-pipe, arranged with so much skill that the least whisper in the adjacent room was heard in this retreat as distinctly as possible; and several round holes, cleverly contrived, and masked in different places, allowed all that went on in the adjacent chamber to be seen.

Père d'Aigrigny and Rodin were now in this hiding-place.

Immediately after the resolute entrance of Agricola and the firm answer of Gabriel, who declared his determination to speak to M. Hardy if he would allow him, D'Aigrigny, not desirous of having any disturbance to preclude the interview of M. Hardy with the smith and the young missionary, — an interview whose consequences might be so fatal for the Company, — went to consult Rodin.

Rodin, during his remarkable and rapid convalescence, resided in the adjacent limits reserved for the reverend fathers. He saw at once the deep importance of his position, whilst he recognised at the same time how ably

D'Aigrigny had followed out his instructions relative to the means by which the interview with Agricola and Hardy was to be prevented, — a manœuvre which would have resulted successfully but for the sudden arrival of the smith. Rodin, desirous of seeing, hearing, judging, and acting for himself, went instantly to ensconce himself in the secret closet in question with D'Aigrigny, after having hastily despatched an emissary to the palace of the Archbishop of Paris; for what purpose, we shall hereafter discover.

The two reverends arrived at the cabinet about the middle of Agricola and Hardy's conversation.

The reverend fathers, at first confident in the gloomy apathy in which Hardy was plunged, from which the generous urging of the smith was unable to draw him, saw the coming danger as it gradually approached, and it became more menacing from the moment when M. Hardy, shaken by the arguments of the smith, consented to receive the letter of Mlle. de Cardoville, until the moment when Agricola called in Gabriel in order to give the final blow to the hesitation of his old master.

Rodin, by the inexhaustible energy of his character, which had given him strength to support the terrible and most agonising operation of Doctor Baleinier, was now out of danger; he had nearly recovered his health, but still his reduced frame was beyond idea. The light, falling from over his head, and directly upon his yellow and shining cranium, his projecting cheek-bones, and angular nose, shone brightly on these prominent features, whilst the rest of his face was furrowed with dark and opaque shadows.

He was the living image of one of those ascetic monks of the Spanish school, — those gloomy portraitures where we see, under some dark brown, half fallen cowl, a skull, the colour of old ivory, with livid cheek-bones, an eye almost extinct in its deep orbit, whilst the rest of the features disappear in the obscure shadow through which

we can scarcely distinguish a human form, kneeling and wrapped in a gown, with a hempen girdle.

This resemblance was the more striking, as Rodin, coming hastily from his chamber, had on his long black woollen dressing-gown, and still more, as being very sensitive of the cold, he had thrown over his shoulders a short cloak of black cloth, with a hood, to protect himself from the northern blast.

D'Aigrigny, not finding room exactly beneath the light which came into the hiding-place, remained in the dimmer shade.

At this moment when we present the two Jesuits to the reader, Agricola had left the chamber to summon Gabriel, and introduce him to his former employer.

Père d'Aigrigny, looking at Rodin with deep and savage anguish, said to him in a low tone:

"But for Mlle. de Cardoville's letter, the persuasions of the smith would have been vain. This accursed girl will, at all times and in all places, be the obstacle against which our plans will be wrecked! Do what we would, still you see she is reconciled to the Indian; and if now the Abbé Gabriel comes to effect his purpose, and by his intervention M. Hardy escapes us, what is to be done? What is to be done? Ah, father, our future is nothing but despair!"

"No;" replied Rodin, dryly, "if there is no delay at the archbishop's palace in executing my orders."

"And in that case?"

"I will still be answerable for all; but I must have the papers in question in less than half an hour."

"They must be ready and signed these two or three days past, for by your command I wrote the very day of your operation of the *moxas* — and —"

Rodin, instead of continuing this conversation, fixed his eye at one of the holes, whence he could see into the apartment, and then motioned with his hand for D'Aigrigny to be silent.

CHAPTER III.

A CHRISTIAN PRIEST.

At this moment Rodin saw Agricola return to Hardy's chamber, leading Gabriel by the hand.

The presence of these two young men, one with his manly, open countenance, and the other with his angelic beauty, offered so striking a contrast to the hypocritical countenances of those persons by whom Hardy was usually environed, that, already aroused by the animated language of the artisan, it seemed as though his heart, so long in a state of collapse, dilated beneath a salutary influence.

Gabriel, although he had never seen M. Hardy, was struck with the extreme languor of his looks, and recognised at once in those suffering, dejected features the fatal stamp of that enervating subjection, that moral emasculation with which the victims of the Company of Jesus are always branded, when they are not fortunately delivered in time from their homicidal influence.

Rodin, with his eye at the hole, and D'Aigrigny, with his ear on the listen, did not lose a word of the following conversation at which they were present, though unseen.

"Here he is, my dear good brother. Sir," said Agricola to M. Hardy, presenting Gabriel to him, "here he is, sir, the loveliest of the priests. Listen to him, and you will again feel hope and happiness spring up, and you will be restored to us. Listen to him, and you will see how he will unmask the cheats who deceive you by

false appearances of religion. Yes, yes, he will unmask them, for he himself has also been a victim to these wretches, — have you not, Gabriel?"

The young missionary made a gesture with his hand to moderate the smith's excitement, and said to M. Hardy, in his soft and thrilling voice:

"If, under the painful circumstances in which you are placed, sir, the aid of one of your brothers in Jesus Christ can be useful to you, I am at your service; and let me assure you, at the same time, that I am already most respectfully attached to you."

"To me, Monsieur l'Abbé?" said M. Hardy.

"I am aware, sir," replied Gabriel, "of all your kindness to my adopted brother — of your gracious generosity to your work-people. They cherish, they venerate you, sir; and may the consciousness of their gratitude, the conviction of having been pleasing to God, whose eternal goodness rejoices in all that is good, be your recompense for the good you have done, and your encouragement for the good which you will still do."

"Thank you, thank you, M. l'Abbé," replied Hardy, touched by language so different from that of D'Aigrigny; "in the sorrow into which I am plunged, it is delightful to the heart to hear language so consolatory spoken to me; and, I confess," added M. Hardy, with a pensive air, "that the loftiness, the gravity of your character give great weight to your words."

"I was afraid of this," said D'Aigrigny, in a low voice, to Rodin, who still remained at his hole, with his eye glaring, and his ear listening; "this Gabriel will do everything to rouse M. Hardy from his apathy, and lead him again to active life."

"I am not afraid of this," replied Rodin, in his short and sharp tone. "M. Hardy may, perhaps, forget himself for a moment, but, when he tries to walk, he will plainly see that his legs will give way under him."

"What, then, is it that your reverence fears?"

"The delay of our reverend father of the archbishopric."

"But what do you hope from him?"

Rodin, whose attention was again attracted, made another sign to D'Aigrigny, who was instantly mute.

A silence of some moments had succeeded to the commencement of Gabriel and Hardy's conversation, the latter being absorbed by the reflections to which Gabriel's language had given birth.

During this momentary pause, Agricola had, mechanically, cast his eyes over some of the lugubrious sentences with which the walls of Hardy's chamber were as it were hung. Suddenly seizing Gabriel by the arm, he exclaimed, with an expressive gesture:

"Oh, my brother, read those maxims — you will understand all! What man, remaining utterly in solitude, with such desolating thoughts, but must sink into the depths of despair — even, perhaps, to suicide? Ah, it is horrible, infamous!" added the artisan, with indignation; "it is moral murder!"

"You are young, my friend!" replied M. Hardy, shaking his head sadly. "You have always been happy, have never experienced any deception. These maxims may seem deceiving to you; but, alas! to me, and to the majority of mankind, they are but too true. Here, below, all is nothing, misery, grief, for man is born to suffer! Is it not true, M. l'Abbé?" he added, addressing Gabriel.

Gabriel had also cast his eyes over the different texts to which the smith directed his attention, and the young priest could not repress a smile of scorn when he remembered the hateful calculation which had dictated the choice of these reflections, and he then answered Hardy, in a voice much agitated:

"No, no, sir! All is not nothing, lies, misery, deception, vanity, here below. No! Man is not born only to suffer. No! God, whose supreme essence is paternal

kindness, has no pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures, whom he made to be loving and happy in this world."

"Do you hear, M. Hardy? Do you hear?" cried the the smith. "He is also a priest, but a true, a sublime priest; and he does not speak like those others."

"Alas! and yet, M. l'Abbé," said M. Hardy, "these maxims, mournful as they are, are extracted from a book which is almost placed on an equality with the inspired volume."

"That book, sir," said Gabriel, "may be abused like every human production! Written to restrain poor monks, in renouncement of the world, in isolation, in the blind obedience of an inactive, barren life,—this book, in preaching the detaching oneself from everything, contempt and self-mistrust of our fellows, an overwhelming servility, aimed at persuading these unfortunate monks that the tortures imposed on them in this life—a life utterly opposed to the eternal views of God for mankind—would be acceptable to the Lord."

"Ah, this book appears to me, thus explained, even still more alarming," said M. Hardy.

"Blasphemy! Impiety!" continued Gabriel, unable to repress his indignation. "To dare to sanctify idleness, isolation, mistrust of everything, when there is nothing divine in the world but the holy labour, the holy love of one's brethren, holy communion with them! Sacrilege! To dare to say that the Father of boundless, immense goodness rejoices in the miseries of his creatures. He, He, just Heaven! He, who has no sufferings but those of his children, he, who has no wish but that of their happiness, he, who has gloriously endowed them with all the treasures of creation, He, indeed, who has bound them to His own immortality by the immortality of their souls!"

"Oh, your words are beautiful, comforting!" exclaimed Hardy, more and more aroused; "but, alas!

why, then, are there so many wretches on earth, in spite of the providential care of the Lord?"

"Yes, oh, yes, there is in the world so much of misery," answered Gabriel, with dejection and sorrow. "Yes, so many poor destitute of all joy, all hope, who are hungry and cold, without clothes or shelter, in the midst of immense riches, which the Creator hath dispensed, not for the happiness of certain men, but for the happiness of all; for it is his wish that the division should be made with justice[1] — but some have seized on the common heritage by cunning and force; and it is that which afflicts God. Oh, yes, if he suffer, it is to see that, in order to satisfy the cruel egotism of some, innumerable masses of creatures are bound down by a deplorable fate. Thus the oppressors of all times, all countries, daring to take God as their accomplice, have united to proclaim, in his name, that fearful maxim, 'Man is born to suffer — his humiliations, his sufferings, are pleasing unto God.' Yes, they have proclaimed this, so that, the more the lot of the creature whom they wrong was harsh, humiliating, painful, the more the creature shed of sweat, of tears, of blood, the more, according to these murderers, was the Lord satisfied and glorified."

"Ah, I understand you! I see all now, I recollect," cried M. Hardy, suddenly, as if awaking from a dream, as though the light had suddenly beamed on his darkened thought. "Oh, yes, this is what I have always believed, before such shocking griefs had weakened my understanding."

"Yes," exclaimed Gabriel; "your great and noble heart always believed this, and then you did not suppose that all was wretchedness here below; for, thanks to

[1] The doctrine, not of sharing, but of community, not of division, but of association, is substantially laid down in this passage of the New Testament, "And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed were his own; but they had all things common. . . . Neither was there any among them that lacked."—*Acts of the Apostles*, iv. 32-34.

yourself, your work-people lived happily; all was not then deceit and vanity, for every day your heart rejoiced in the gratitude of your fellow creatures; all was not then tears and lamentations, for you saw constantly around you smiling countenances. The creature was not then inexorably devoted to misfortune, because it filled him with felicity. Ah, believe me, when we enter, with all our hearts, our love, and our faith, into the real views of God — of God the Saviour, who has said, 'Love one another' — we see, we feel, we know that the end of the scheme of humanity is happiness for all, and that man was born to be happy! Ah, my brother," added Gabriel, moved to tears as he looked at the maxims with which the chamber was surrounded, "this terrible book has done you great harm — this book, which they have had the audacity to call 'The Imitation of Christ,'" added Gabriel, with indignation. "This book the imitation of the word of Christ, — this miserable book, which contains only thoughts of vengeance, contempt, death, and despair, when Christ had only the words of peace, pardon, hope, and love!"

"Oh, I believe you!" cried M. Hardy, overwhelmed with delight. "I believe you, and I have need of believing you."

"Oh, my brother!" resumed Gabriel, more and more moved; "my brother, believe in a God always good, always merciful, always loving. Believe in a God who blesses labour, a God who would suffer cruelly for his children, if, instead of employing the goods with which he has endowed you for the good of all, you were to isolate yourself for ever in an enervating and sterile despair! No, no, God will not have it so! Up, then, up, my brother," added Gabriel, taking Hardy cordially by the hand, who rose, as if obedient to a generous magnetic influence. "Up, my brother, a whole world of labourers bless and appeal to you; quit this tomb — come — come into the broad and expansive air, the eye

of the bright sun, to the midst of warm and sympathising hearts. Leave this stifling air for the wholesome and vivifying air of liberty; leave this sad and gloomy retreat for an abode animated by the song of the labourer. Come, come, and meet again those hard-working artisans, whose protector you are. Lifted up by their robust arms, pressed to their throbbing and generous bosoms, surrounded by women, children, old men, weeping with joy for your return amongst them, you will be again invigorated. You will feel that the will, the power of God is in you, inasmuch as you can do so much for the happiness of your fellow creatures."

"Gabriel, you say the truth — it is to you, it is to God that our poor family of hard-working mechanics will owe the return of their benefactor," exclaimed Agricola, throwing himself into Gabriel's arms, and squeezing him most affectionately to his heart. "Ah, now I fear nothing. M. Hardy will be restored to us!"

"Yes; you are right, it will be to him, this right worthy priest of Christ, that I shall owe my return to myself, for here I was buried alive in a sepulchre," said M. Hardy, who had risen straight firmly, his cheeks lightly coloured, his eye sparkling, although but so recently he was pallid, bowed down, prostrated.

"At last, then, you are restored to us?" cried the smith; "and now I have no more fears."

"I hope so, my friend," replied M. Hardy.

"You accept Mlle. de Cardoville's offers?"

"By and by I will write to her on the subject; but, first," he added, with a grave and serious air, "I wish to confer alone with my brother," and he offered his hand gratefully to Gabriel. "He will allow me to give him the name of brother — he, the generous apostle of the fraternity!"

"Oh, my mind is easy! As soon as I have left you alone with him," said Agricola, "I shall run to Mlle. de Cardoville to tell her the good news. But, now I

think of it, if you leave to-day, M. Hardy, where will you go to? Shall I look out for you?"

"We will talk that over with your worthy and excellent brother," replied M. Hardy. "Go, I entreat, and thank Mlle. de Cardoville for me, and say that this evening I shall do myself the honour of replying to her."

"Ah, sir, I must keep my heart and head steady, if I would not go wild with joy!" said the worthy Agricola, placing his hands in turns on his head and heart in the intoxication of his happiness. Then, turning towards Gabriel, he again folded him to his heart, and said in his ear, "In one hour I shall return, but not alone, all our people with me, *en masse*, — you'll see; but, not a word to M. Hardy, I have my plan."

And the smith went out in a state of unutterable delight.

Gabriel and Hardy remained alone.

Rodin and D'Aigrigny had, as we know, been invisibly present at this scene.

"Well, and what does your reverence now think?" inquired D'Aigrigny of Rodin, in great alarm.

"I think that they have delayed too long in returning from the archiepiscopal palace, and that this heretical missionary will ruin everything," said Rodin, gnawing his nails to the quick until the blood started.

CHAPTER IV.

THE CONFESSION.

When Agricola had quitted the chamber, M. Hardy, approaching Gabriel, said to him:

"M. l'Abbé —"

"No, say brother. You have given me this name, and I would have it," said the young man, affectionately, as he extended his hand to Hardy, who shook it cordially, and replied:

"Well, my brother, your words have put new life into me, have recalled me to duties which in my sorrows I had overlooked; and now, may the strength not be wanting to me in the fresh trial I must undergo, for, alas, you do not know all!"

"What do you mean?" asked Gabriel, with interest.

"I have painful confessions to make to you," answered M. Hardy, after a moment's silence and reflection. "Will you hear my confession?"

"I beseech you say your confidence, my brother," observed Gabriel.

"Then, can you not hear me as a confessor?"

"As much as I can," replied Gabriel, "I avoid official confession, if it may be so called. It has, in my opinion, many unfortunate disadvantages; but I am happy, oh, very happy! when I inspire such confidence, that a friend comes to open his heart to me as a friend, and says to me, 'I suffer; comfort me. I doubt; counsel me. I am happy; participate in my joy.' Oh, believe that to me this confession is the most holy. It is

this that Christ intended when he said, 'Confess ye one to another.' Tenfold wretched is he who in his life has not found one faithful and sure heart to which he could thus confess, — is he not, my brother? Yet, as I have submitted myself to the laws of the church, by virtue of vows voluntarily pronounced," said the young priest, unable to repress a sigh, "I obey the laws of the church; and if you desire it, my brother, I will be a confessor, and hear you."

"You obey even those laws which you do not approve?" asked Hardy, astonished at this submission.

"My brother, whatever experience may teach us, whatever it may unveil," answered Gabriel, sorrowfully, "a vow freely, knowingly made, is with a priest a sacred engagement; with a man of honour, a sworn oath. So long as I remain in the church, I will obey its discipline, how heavy soever that discipline may at times be."

"For you, my brother?"

"Yes; for us country priests, or for those doing duty in cities, for us, the working clergy, the discipline is severe. The aristocracy which has been gradually introduced into the church is often of almost feudal rigour towards us; but such is the divine essence of Christianity that it resists the abuses which tend to destroy its nature; and it is in the obscure ranks of the lower clergy that I can serve, better than any where else, the holy cause of the disinherited, and preach them emancipation with greater independence. It is for that, my brother, that I remain in the church, and, being there, I submit to its discipline. I tell you this, my brother," added Gabriel, with warmth, "because you and I preach in the same cause. The artisans whom you have brought to share with you in the fruit of your labours are no longer disinherited. Thus, then, by the good you effect, you serve Christ more efficaciously than I do."

"And I will continue to serve him, provided, as I have already observed, I have sufficient strength."

"Why should your strength be wanting?"

"If you knew how wretched I am, — if you knew all the blows that have struck me!"

"No doubt the ruin and conflagration which have destroyed your factory were most deplorable."

"Ah, my brother," said M. Hardy, interrupting Gabriel, "what was that? My courage would not have drooped before a misfortune which money alone could repair. But alas! there are losses which nothing can repair; there are ruins of the heart which nothing can renovate. No; and yet, just now, yielding before the enthusiasm of your elevated language, the future, dark as it was till then before me, brightened. You had encouraged, animated me, by reminding me of the duties I had still to discharge in the world."

"Well, my brother?"

"Alas! fresh fears come to beset me, when I think of returning to that active life in the world where I have suffered so much."

"But who aroused, created these fears?" inquired Gabriel, with increasing interest.

"Listen, my brother," replied Hardy. "I had concentrated all the tenderness and devotion which was left in my heart in two beings, — in a friend whom I believed sincere, and in an affection still more tender. The friend deceived me in an atrocious manner. The woman, after having sacrificed her duties for me, has had the courage (for which I must the more honour her) to sacrifice our loves to the repose of her mother, and has quitted France for ever. Alas! I fear these sorrows are incurable, and will come and crush me in the very midst of the new path which you are urging me to pursue. I confess my weakness, — it is great; and it alarms me the more, as I have no right to remain idle, solitary, so long as I can still do something for my fellow creatures. You have enlightened me on this duty, my brother, but still my sole fear, in spite of my good resolution, is, I

repeat, to feel my strength abandon me, when I again find myself in this world, which must for ever be to me cold and deserted."

"But these worthy artisans who await you, bless you, will they not people the world for you?"

"Yes, my brother," replied Hardy, with bitterness; "but formerly, to this pleasing feeling of doing good were united two affections which shared my existence. They are no longer mine, but leave in my heart an immense void. I had relied on religion to fill it, but, alas, to replace what causes me regret so poignant, all that I have given to me to feed on in my desolated heart is my despair; and they tell me that the more deeply I dig into it, the greater tortures I experience, the more meritorious shall I be in the eyes of the Lord."

"And they deceive you, my brother, I assure you. It is happiness, and not grief, which is in the eyes of the Lord the end of human creation; he would have man happy, because he would have him just and good."

"Oh, that I had sooner heard these words of hope!" exclaimed Hardy. "My wounds would then be healed, instead of becoming incurable; I should the sooner have recommenced the work of good which you urge me to undertake, and have found in that the consolation, oblivion, perhaps, of my woes; whilst at present, oh, it is indeed horrible to confess, they have made grief so familiar to me, so identified it with my existence, that I seem to think it must for ever paralyse my existence."

Then, ashamed of this relapse into weakness, Hardy added, in a voice of agony, hiding his face in his hands:

"Oh, pardon — pardon my weakness! But if you knew what a poor creature is who only lived on affection, and to whom everything failed at once! Yes, indeed, it seeks on all sides to attach itself to something; and its hesitation, fears, weaknesses even, are, believe me, more worthy of compassion than disdain."

There was something so distressing in the humiliation of this confession, that Gabriel was moved by it even to tears.

From this almost diseased weakness the young missionary recognised with affright the terrible effects of the manœuvres of the reverend fathers, so skilful in poisoning, in rendering mortal the wounds of susceptible and tender souls (whom they seek to isolate and inveigle), by distilling into them incessantly, drop by drop, the acrid poison of the most desolating maxims.

Knowing, too, that the excess of despair has a sort of bewildering attraction, these priests dig, dig out this abyss around their victim, until, distracted, fascinated, he plunges incessantly his fixed and burning look into the depths of this precipice, which must eventually engulf him, — fatal shipwreck, of which their cupidity gathers all the spoils!

In vain does the azure of the sky, the gilded sunbeam shine; in vain does the unhappy wretch feel that he would be saved by raising his eyes towards heaven; in vain does he even cast a stealthy glance heavenward; for at last, yielding to the omnipotence of the infernal charm cast around him by these malevolent priests, he again plunges his looks into the depths of the gulf which gapes to receive him.

It was thus that M. Hardy stood, and thus Gabriel understood all the danger of the unhappy man's position; and, collecting all his strength to snatch him from this destruction so imminent, he cried:

"What do you mean, my brother, by pity and disdain? What is there more sacred, more holy in the world, in the eyes of God and men, than a soul which seeks for faith in which to fix itself after the torments of the passions? Take courage, my brother, your wounds are not incurable; once out of this house, believe me, they will rapidly heal."

"Alas! how can I indulge in any such hope?"

"Believe me, my brother, they will heal from the moment when your past woes, far from arousing in you thoughts of despair, shall awaken thoughts that are consolatory, — almost delightful."

"Thoughts that are consolatory — almost delightful?" exclaimed M. Hardy, unable to believe what he heard.

"Yes," replied Gabriel, smiling with angelic sweetness; "for there are great delights, great consolations in pity, in pardon. Tell me — tell me, my brother, did the sight of those who had betrayed him inspire Christ with hatred, despair, and vengeance? No, no; he found in his heart words filled with mildness and pardon; he smiled in his tears with unspeakable indulgence, and he prayed, too, for his enemies. Well, then, instead of suffering with so much bitterness for the treachery of a friend, pity him, my brother; pray affectionately for him; for you are not the more miserable of the two. Tell me, in your generous friendship, what a treasure has not this faithless friend lost? Who has told you that he does not repent, that he does not suffer? Alas! it is true, if you constantly think of the ill this treachery has done you, your heart will break in its incurable desolation. Think, on the contrary, of the charm of forgiveness, the sweetness of prayer, and your heart will be lightened, and your soul be happy, for it will ascend to God."

To open suddenly before a disposition so generous, so delicate, so loving, the adorable and infinite way of pardon and of prayer, was to respond to its instincts — was to save this unhappy man; whilst to chain him down in a gloomy, barren despair, was to slay him, as the reverend fathers had hoped to do.

Hardy remained for a moment as if dazzled at the sight of the radiant horizon, which for the second time Gabriel's apostolic language had suddenly called up before his eyes.

Then, his heart palpitating with such contrary emotions, he exclaimed:

"Oh, my brother, what holy power is in your words! How could you thus change in a moment, as it were, bitterness into sweetness? It seems to me as if already a calm was renewed in my soul, when I reflect, as you suggest, on pardon, prayer — prayer filled with mildness and hope."

"Ah, you will see," continued Gabriel, enthusiastically, "what soft joys await you! Pray for those we love — pray for those we have loved, to put, by our prayers, God in communion with those we cherish fondly. And she whose love was so precious to you, — why should her memory be painful to you? Why flee from her? Ah, my brother, on the contrary, think of her but to purify, to sanctify the thought by prayer; to allow a divine love to succeed a terrestrial one; a Christian love, the heavenly love of a brother, for a sister in Jesus Christ! And then, if this woman has been guilty in the eyes of Heaven, what so delightful as to pray for her! What unspeakable joy to be enabled each day to speak of her to God, — to God who, always merciful and good, touched by your prayers, will pardon her; for he reads the deepest recesses of the heart, and knows how often, alas! many lapses are so fatal. Did not Christ intercede with the Father for the offending Magdalene and the woman taken in adultery? Lost creatures, he did not repulse them, he did not curse them — he pitied them, prayed for them, 'because they had loved much,' said the Saviour of men."

"Ah, now I understand you!" cried Hardy. "Prayer is still to love; prayer is to pardon, and not to curse; it is to hope, instead of despair! Prayers, indeed, are the tears which fall on the heart like delicious dews, and not those which scorch as they drop. Yes, I understand you now, for you do not say, 'To suffer, is to pray.' No, no, I feel it. You speak the truth when you declare that to

hope, to pardon, is to pray. Yes; and, now, thanks to you, I will return to life without fear."

Then, his eyes moist with tears, Hardy extended his arms to Gabriel, crying, "Ah, my brother, you save me a second time!"

And these two good and noble creatures threw themselves into each other's arms.

Rodin and D'Aigrigny had, as we know, been present, unseen, at this scene. Rodin, listening with "greedy ear," had not lost one word of the conversation.

At the moment when Gabriel and Hardy were embracing, Rodin suddenly withdrew his reptile eye from the hole through which he had been looking.

The Jesuit's countenance had an expression of diabolical joy and triumph. D'Aigrigny, whom the *dénouement* of the scene had, on the contrary, depressed and alarmed, could not comprehend the gratified air of his associate, and looked at him with indescribable astonishment.

"I have the lever," he said, suddenly, in his curt and sharp manner.

"What do you mean?" asked D'Aigrigny, amazed.

"Have you a travelling carriage here?" asked Rodin, giving a reply to the question of the reverend father.

D'Aigrigny, astonished at this question, opened his troubled eyes, and repeated, mechanically:

"A travelling carriage?"

"Yes, yes," said Rodin, impatiently; "do you think I'm talking Hebrew? Is there a travelling carriage here? Is that a plain question?"

"Certainly; for I have mine here," replied the reverend father.

"Then send for post-horses instantly."

"For what purpose?"

"To convey M. Hardy."

"Convey M. Hardy!" replied D'Aigrigny, thinking Rodin delirious.

"Yes," he replied. "You will convey him to St. Herem this evening."

"To that sad and gloomy solitude — he? — M. Hardy?"

D'Aigrigny believed he must be in a dream.

"He — M. Hardy," replied Rodin, in the affirmative, and shrugging his shoulders.

"Convey M. Hardy — now — after what Gabriel has — "

"Before another half hour M. Hardy will beg me on his knees to convey him from Paris to the world's end, — to a desert, if I can."

"And Gabriel?"

"And the letter which they bring me from the archbishop's palace but just now?"

"Why, you said it was too late now."

"But then I had not the lever — now I hold it," answered Rodin, in his shortest tone.

So saying, the two reverend fathers hastily left the concealed retreat.

CHAPTER V.

THE VISIT.

It is useless to remark that, with a reserve full of dignity, Gabriel had contented himself to have recourse to none but the most generous means to snatch M. Hardy from the murderous influence of the reverend fathers. It was repugnant to the great and noble mind of the young missionary to descend to the disclosure of the odious machinations of these priests. He would only have had recourse to this extreme means if his earnest and sympathising language had failed with the infatuation of M. Hardy.

"Exertion, prayer, and pardon," said Hardy, with ecstacy, after having pressed Gabriel in his arms. "With these three words you have restored me to life and hope."

He had just pronounced these words when the door opened and a servant entered, who, without uttering a syllable, handed a large envelope to the young priest, and then quitted the apartment.

Gabriel, much surprised, took the letter and looked at it mechanically at first; then perceiving at one of the corners a particular stamp, he broke the seal hastily, drew out a paper in the form of an official despatch, to which was appended a seal of red wax.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gabriel, involuntarily, and in a voice of deep emotion. Then addressing M. Hardy, "Excuse me, sir."

"What is it, any bad news?" inquired Hardy, with an air of interest.

"Yes, very bad," answered Gabriel, sorrowfully. Then he added, speaking to himself, "So it was for this, then, that I was summoned to Paris; and they have not even deigned to hear me, but strike without permitting me to justify myself!" Again he was silent for a moment, then he added, with a deep sigh of resignation, "No matter, I must obey. I will obey — my vows compel me."

Hardy, looking at the young priest with as much surprise as uneasiness, said to him, affectionately:

"Although my friendship and gratitude have been yours but so short a time, yet can I not be, in any way, serviceable to you? I owe you so much that I should be so happy in any way, however trifling, to prove my gratitude."

"You will have done a great deal for me, my brother, by leaving me the remembrance of this day; you make my resignation to a cruel blow the more easy."

"A cruel blow?" said Hardy, hastily.

"Or, rather — no — a painful surprise," replied Gabriel. And, turning away his head, he wiped a tear which was on his cheek, and continued, "But, by addressing myself to the good God, the just God, I shall not lack consolation; I have the first fruit already when I leave you in the right and noble path. Adieu, then, my brother, we shall soon meet again."

"You leave me?"

"It must be so. I should wish first to know how this letter came to me here; then I must instantly obey an order I have received. My good Agricola will come to take your orders, — he will inform me of your resolution, and the house where I can meet you; and when you please, we will see each other again."

Hardy from delicacy did not press Gabriel to inform him of the cause of his chagrin, and replied:

"You ask me when we shall see each other again? Why, to-morrow; since I quit this abode to-day."

"To-morrow, then, my dear brother," said Gabriel, squeezing Hardy's hand.

The latter, by an involuntary movement, perhaps instinctive, at the moment when Gabriel withdrew his hand, squeezed it, and retained it between his own, as if, fearing to see him depart, he would fain have retained him.

The young priest, surprised, looked at Hardy, who said to him, with a benign smile, and releasing the hand he held:

"Pardon, my brother; but you see, after what I have suffered here, I have become like a child who is afraid when he is left alone."

"And I am quite easy about you. I leave you with consoling thoughts, with assured hopes. They will suffice to occupy your solitude until the arrival of my worthy Agricola, who will not be long before he returns. So once more farewell until to-morrow, my brother."

"Farewell, until to-morrow, my dear preserver. Oh, do not fail to come; for I shall still have the greatest need of your benevolent support in order to make my first steps in the open daylight, — I, who have been so long motionless in the midst of darkness."

"Till to-morrow, then," said Gabriel; "and till then, courage, hope, and prayer."

"Courage, hope, and prayer," responded M. Hardy; "with these words I am very strong."

And he was left alone.

It was very singular, but the kind of involuntary fear which Hardy had experienced at the moment when Gabriel was about to leave him was reproduced in his mind under another form; immediately after the departure of the young priest, Hardy thought he beheld a sinister and expanding shadow succeed to the pure and soft light that beamed in the presence of Gabriel.

This kind of reaction was the more easily to be conceived after a day full of such deep and contrasting emotions, especially if we reflect on the state of physical and moral weakness to which Hardy had been for so long a time reduced.

About a quarter of an hour after the departure of Gabriel, the servant attached to the service of the boarder of the reverend fathers entered, and handed him a letter.

"From whom does it come?" he inquired.

"From a boarder in the house, sir," replied the man, with a bow.

This man had a sly and puritanical look, — his hair flat over his brows, and his eyes always looking on the ground, and, as he awaited the reply of M. Hardy, he crossed his hands, and twiddled his thumbs composedly.

M. Hardy broke the seal of the letter just received, and read as follows:

"*Monsieur:* — I have only to-day learned, at this very moment, and accidentally, that I am with you in this respectable house. A protracted illness which I have had, and the extreme retirement in which I live, will explain my ignorance of our being neighbours. Besides, as we never met but once, sir, although that circumstance which procured me the honour of an interview was very recent, yet it was so distressing for you that I cannot suppose you have forgotten it."

Hardy made a gesture of surprise, recalled his recollections; but, not finding anything which could give him any light on the matter, continued to read:

"This circumstance, however, awakened in me so deep and respectful a sympathy for you, sir, that I cannot resist my strong desire to present my respects to you, especially when I understand that you are about to quit this house to-day, as I have just learned from the excellent and worthy Abbé Gabriel, one of the

men whom I love, admire, and venerate most in the world.

"May I hope, sir, that, at the moment when you are about to quit our common retreat to return into the world, you will deign to receive, with kind acquiescence, the prayer, perhaps ill-timed, of a poor old man henceforth dedicated to a life of unbroken solitude, and who can never expect to meet you in the midst of the whirlpool of society which he has quitted for ever?

"Awaiting the honour of your reply, sir, allow me to present the assurances of the profound esteem of him who has the honour to be, sir, with the most unfeigned respect,

"Your very humble and very obedient servant,

"RODIN."

After perusing this letter, and the name of him who had signed it, M. Hardy again summoned up his recollection, tried a long while, but was unable to recall either the name of Rodin or the "distressing circumstance" to which he alluded.

After a protracted silence he said to the servant:

"It was M. Rodin who gave you this letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"And who is M. Rodin?"

"A good old gentleman, who is recovering from a long illness, which very nearly carried him off. He is hardly recovered yet, but is still so sad and so weak that it is painful to see him; and it's a great pity, so it is, for there is not a worthier or nicer gentleman in the whole house, unless it is monsieur," added the servant, bowing fawningly to Hardy, "and he's just such another as M. Rodin."

"M. Rodin?" said Hardy, with a pensive air; "it is strange, I do not remember the name, or any event attached to it."

"If monsieur will give his answer," observed the ser-

vant, "I'll take it to M. Rodin, who is taking leave of the Père d'Aigrigny."

"Taking leave?"

"Yes, sir, the post-horses are just arrived."

"For whom?" asked M. Hardy.

"For Père d'Aigrigny, sir."

"Is he going to travel, then?" inquired Hardy, much astonished.

"Oh, I dare say he won't be very long absent," said the servant, with a confidential air, "for the reverend father has no one with him, and very little luggage. Besides, no doubt the reverend father will come to take leave of you, sir. But what answer to M. Rodin?"

The letter which Hardy had received from the reverend father was couched in such polite terms, he spoke of Gabriel with so much kindness, that M. Hardy, impelled, moreover, by a natural curiosity, and seeing no reason for refusing this interview at the moment he was about to quit the house, replied to the servant:

"Be so kind as to tell M. Rodin that, if he will take the trouble to come to me here, I will await him."

"I'll go and tell him this moment, sir," said the servant, who bowed and quitted the room.

Alone, M. Hardy, whilst asking himself who M. Rodin could be, employed himself in making some trifling preparations for his departure. Under no consideration in the world would he have passed another night in this house, and, in order to keep up his courage, he called to mind every instant the apostolic and mild language of Gabriel, just as believers recite certain litanies that they may not fall into temptation.

The servant soon returned, and said to M. Hardy:

"Here's M. Rodin, sir."

"Beg him to come in."

Rodin entered, dressed in his black dressing-gown, and holding his old silk cap in his hand.

The servant left the room.

The twilight was coming on. M. Hardy rose to meet Rodin, whose features he could not at first recognise; but when the reverend father had reached a spot which was lighted up by a ray of brighter hue near the window, Hardy, having looked at the Jesuit for a moment, could not repress a cry extorted from him by surprise and agonising remembrance.

This first movement of astonishment and pain over, Hardy, recovering himself, said to Rodin, in a faltering voice:

"You here, sir? Ah, you are right, the circumstance under which I saw you for the first time was indeed distressing."

"Ah, my dear sir," said Rodin, in a paternal and satisfied tone, "I was sure you had not forgotten me."

CHAPTER VI.

PRAYER.

It will be recollected that Rodin went (although then unknown to M. Hardy) to find him at his factory, in order to disclose to him the infamous treachery of M. de Blessac, — a frightful shock which had only for a few moments preceded a second blow no less terrible, for it was in the presence of Rodin that Hardy learned the unexpected departure of the woman he adored. After the preceding scenes we may understand how afflicting to him was the unexpected appearance of Rodin. Yet, thanks to the salutary effects of Gabriel's counsels, he grew gradually calmer. To the contraction of his features there succeeded a melancholy calm, and he said to Rodin:

"Indeed, sir, I did not expect to have met you in this house."

"Alas, sir!" replied Rodin, with a sigh, "I did not think either to have come here, in all probability to finish my wretched days, when I went, without knowing you, and with the sole view of rendering a service to a worthy man, to unmask to you an infamous treachery."

"In truth, sir, you did me a real service, and perhaps at that painful moment I expressed my gratitude very inefficiently, for at the moment when you revealed to me M. de Blessac's treachery — "

"You were overwhelmed by another piece of most painful information," said Rodin, interrupting Hardy; "I shall never forget the sudden arrival of that poor,

pale, agitated lady, who, regardless of my presence, came to inform you that a person whose affection was very dear to you had suddenly quitted Paris."

"Yes, sir, and without thinking of thanking you, I rushed precipitately from the apartment," observed Hardy, in a melancholy tone.

"Do you know, sir," said Rodin, after a moment's pause, "that there are sometimes singular approximations?"

"What do you mean, sir?"

"Whilst I was going to you to inform you that you were betrayed in an infamous manner — myself — I —"

Rodin interrupted himself as if he was overcome by some sudden emotion, and his face betrayed such intense grief, that M. Hardy said to him, with interest:

"What ails you, sir?"

"Pardon me," replied Rodin, with a bitter smile, "thanks to the religious counsels of the angelic Abbé Gabriel, I have learned to understand what resignation means; yet, still, there are times when at certain recollections I experience intense pain. I was saying," continued Rodin, in a firmer voice, "that the day after that on which I had been to say to you, you are deceived, I was myself the victim of an infamous deception. An adopted son, a forsaken child whom I had protected —" Again pausing, he passed his trembling hand over his eyes, and said, "Excuse me, sir, for speaking of sorrows to which you must be indifferent. Excuse the indiscreet sorrow of a poor, grief-stricken old man."

"Sir, I have suffered too much myself for any sorrows to be indifferent to me," replied M. Hardy; "besides you are not a stranger to me. You have rendered me a real service, and we experience a mutual veneration for a young priest."

"The Abbé Gabriel!" cried Rodin, interrupting Hardy. "Ah, sir, he is my preserver, my benefactor. If you but knew his cares, his devotion for me during my long ill-

ness, which a terrible grief had occasioned; if you knew the unutterable sweetness of the counsel he gave me!"

"If I knew it, sir!" exclaimed Hardy; "oh, yes, I know how salutary his influence is."

"Ah, sir, are not the precepts of religion which fall from his lips full of mildness?" replied Rodin, with enthusiasm. "Are they not comforting? Do they not make us love and hope, instead of fear and tremble?"

"Alas! sir, in this very house," said Hardy, "I have made the comparison."

"I," said Rodin, "I have been so fortunate as to have at once the angelic Abbé Gabriel for my confessor, or, rather, my confidant."

"Yes," replied Hardy, "for he prefers confidence to confession."

"How well you know him!" said Rodin, with an air of delight and simplicity impossible to portray. "He is not a man, he is an angel. His language, so persuasive, would convert the most hardened; myself, for instance, — I confess it, without being impious, — I had lived in the sentiments of religion which is called natural, but the angelic Abbé Gabriel gradually fixed my vague beliefs, gave them a body, a soul, and, in fact, has given me faith."

"Oh, he is a priest according to Christ, he is a priest all love and forgiveness," cried M. Hardy.

"What you say is so true," answered Rodin, "that I became almost mad with grief; now thinking of the ungrateful wretch who had paid my paternal bounties by the most monstrous ingratitude, and giving way to all the agonies of despair, now falling into a gloomy reverie as chilling as the grave, when suddenly the Abbé Gabriel appeared, the darkness vanished, and the daylight broke in upon me."

"You are right, sir, there are singular approximations," said M. Hardy, giving way more and more to the confidence and sympathy which were excited in him by

so many points of similarity between his own and the pretended position of Rodin. "And, in truth," he added, "I now congratulate myself on having seen you before leaving this house. If I had been capable of relapsing into a state of contemptible weakness, your example would in itself prevent me. Since I have heard you, I feel myself more strengthened in the noble path which has been disclosed to me by him whom you so correctly call the angelic abbé."

"Then the poor old man will not have to regret following the first impulse of his heart which attracted him towards you," observed Rodin, with touching expression; "you will at least preserve a recollection of me in that world to which you are about to return?"

"Be assured of that, sir. But allow me one question. You remain, they tell me, in this house?"

"Why not? The calm is here so perfect, one is so little disturbed in one's prayers, and you must know," added Rodin, in a tone filled with good feeling, "I have suffered so much ill, such misery, the behaviour of that ingrate who has deceived me has been so horrible, he was so depraved in his conduct, that God must have been greatly angered against him. I am so old that I can scarcely hope, by the exercise of fervent prayer during the few days that remain to me, to disarm the just anger of the Lord. Oh, prayer — prayer — it was the Abbé Gabriel who revealed to me all the power, all the sweetness, and also all the severe duties it imposes."

"Truly, these duties are great and sacred," replied M. Hardy, with a pensive air.

"Do you know the life of De Rancey?" inquired Rodin, looking at Hardy with singular expression.

"The founder of the abbey of La Trappe?" said Hardy, surprised at Rodin's inquiry. "I have vaguely, and a long time ago, heard talk of the grounds of his conversion."

"Because there is nowhere a more striking example of the omnipotence of prayer, and the state of almost divine ecstasy to which it can lead religious minds. In a few words I will tell you this instructive and tragic history. M. de Rancey — but I beg your pardon, I am encroaching on your time."

"No, no," eagerly replied M. Hardy, "you know not, on the contrary, how much what you are saying interests me. My conversation with Gabriel was suddenly interrupted, and, when I listen to you, it seems as though I heard the full development of the sentiments he had vaguely expressed. Speak then, I conjure you."

"Most willingly, for I would fain have the advantages I derived (thanks to our heavenly-minded abbé) from the conversion of M. de Rancey, as full of blessings and benefits to you under your particular affliction, as by the aid of our divine Gabriel it was to me in mine."

"And it was the Abbé Gabriel who worked your cure?"

"It was, indeed; and to give greater weight to his own exhortations, he cited to me this edifying history. Alas! sir, I owe it to the consoling words of this youthful priest that my poor crushed feelings, and all but broken heart, ever regained strength and courage to endure what further trials the all-wise Disposer of men shall see fit to send."

"Nay, then, I shall listen with a double interest!"

"M. de Rancey," commenced Rodin, attentively observing M. Hardy, "was a man of the world, and a soldier; young, handsome, and ardent in all his affections; who passionately loved and was beloved by a young and lovely girl, whose merits were only equalled by her exalted rank. What were the obstacles which prevented their union, I know not, but their love was a stolen one, and their joys required the mask of concealment; but each night M. de Rancey was admitted by a secret staircase to the apartment of his mistress, from whence he

again retired at dawn of day, silently and unseen as he had entered. Theirs was, indeed, a passion which the human heart can feel but once during life, and the very mystery which enshrouded their love, the sacrifices made by the devoted girl, the risks they ran, even combined to give a stronger character to their armour. And thus, amid the shades and tranquillity of night, did these happy lovers meet during two years, passed in a delirium and fervour of tenderness almost approaching a state of superhuman bliss."

At these words M. Hardy started; for the first time since his troubles began, a burning blush rose to his cheeks and forehead; his heart beat with impetuous violence, in spite of his attempts to control his emotion, for he remembered how often he, too, had experienced all the intoxicating ardour, the burning fervour of a hidden and guilty passion.

Although the day was rapidly declining, Rodin, casting a sidelong glance on M. Hardy, perceived that his language had taken the desired effect on the mind of his victim. He then proceeded:

"Sometimes, when reflecting on all the consequences that would ensue to his adored mistress, if their liaison were discovered, M. de Rancey proposed to break the tender ties which bound their hearts; but the impassioned girl would throw her arms around the neck of her lover, and threaten him in language the most frantically tender to reveal all herself, and brave every danger that might befall her, if he ever again hinted at their parting. Too weak and too deeply enamoured of his beautiful mistress to resist her prayers, M. de Rancey yielded to her wish; and the enraptured pair, blinded, fascinated by their intoxicating passion, gave themselves up with fresh ardour to the concealed delights of their mutual love till they forgot all things on earth — almost in heaven."

M. Hardy listened with feverish, restless avidity and

burning eagerness, while the Jesuit persisted in thus dwelling on the sensual delights of an ardent though hidden love; by degrees the warm, the lover-like recollections of his own past happiness, which had been until now drowned in his tears, resumed their pristine force, and to the gentle calmness produced by the words of Gabriel succeeded a deep, painful, and oppressive agitation, which, combined with the reaction arising from the many exciting events of the day, began to disturb even the clear action of his brain.

Having gained his proposed end, Rodin thus resumed his narrative:

"A fatal moment arrived. M. de Rancey was compelled by his military duties to quit for awhile the mistress he so idolised; but the campaign was a short one, and he hastened back more enamoured than ever. He had contrived to write word to his beloved that she might expect him almost as soon as his letter; and, accordingly, directly the shades of night had fallen, he hurried to the private staircase leading to the apartment of his dearest treasure. Alas! he found but the empty case, the jewel was for ever lost to him, — she who was dearer to him than his heart's blood lay stretched in the cold embrace of death."

"Dreadful!" murmured M. Hardy, shuddering with nameless dread, and covering his face with his hands.

"She had expired that very morning," continued Rodin; "two large tapers were burning beside her funeral couch. M. de Rancey neither could nor would believe it possible she could be dead; he threw himself on his knees beside her, and in his frenzied grief sought to raise that head, — so lovely, so beloved, — that he might cover it with kisses; the beauteous head parted from the fair neck, and remained a ghastly spectacle in his arms! Yes," continued Rodin, observing M. Hardy start, turn pale, and draw back in terror, "yes, the cause of death had been so sudden and so extraordinary that

the unfortunate girl had not been enabled to receive the last holy rites of our church! After her decease, the medical gentlemen who had attended her, with the view of discovering the nature of the singular malady which had thus baffled their skill, had mutilated the corpse for the purpose of investigating the supposed seat of disease."

As Rodin reached this point of his narrative the day was drawing to a close, and a dim twilight alone prevailed in the gloomy apartment of M. Hardy, amid which, faintly distinguishable, was the crafty, saturnine countenance of Rodin, whose tall, meagre form, clad in his long, loose, black robe, added to the effect produced by the almost fiendish glare of his malignant eyes. Bending beneath the violent emotions produced by this recital, so strangely intermingled with pictures of death, voluptuous pleasure, stolen love, and death-bed horrors, M. Hardy remained speechless and agitated, waiting with intense curiosity for Rodin to proceed, his heart palpitating with an indescribable mixture of agony, fear, and deep interest. At length he managed to articulate, as he wiped the cold sweat from his brow:

"And M. de Rancey, what became of him?"

"After two days of absolute delirium," continued Rodin, "he renounced the world, and shut himself up in the most impenetrable solitude. The first part of his retirement was dreadful; in his utter despair he uttered cries and groans of rage and grief which might be heard afar off, and twice he even raised his hand against his life for the purpose of escaping from the fearful visions by which he was tormented."

"Had he, then, visions?" inquired M. Hardy, with increased curiosity and a thrill of sympathising agony.

"Oh, yes," answered Rodin, in a solemn tone, "he had, indeed, most horrible ones! Continually did his eyes behold the unhappy creature, who, dying in the midst of her guilty passion for him, had been thereby plunged in the middle of tormenting flames, her lovely

features distorted by the tortures she underwent, and her lips shrieking in wild, despairing misery. Sometimes she was presented to his mental vision grinding her teeth with impotent fury, and, writhing and twisting in consuming agony, she wept tears of blood, and in an avenging and distracted voice she called aloud to her seducer, 'Be thou for ever cursed! — cursed! — cursed! thou, my destroyer and ruin!'"

And as Rodin uttered these last words, he approached each time a step nearer M. Hardy, as though to give greater effect to what he was saying.

If the exhaustion, terror, and wretchedness of M. Hardy be taken into consideration; if it be remembered that the Jesuit had just been disturbing and probing the very soul of this unfortunate man, had again called into life by his sensual details a love chilled and buried beneath a weight of grief and tears, but not extinguished; if it be also recollected that M. Hardy, in addition to his other causes of distress, had to reproach himself with having, by leading a woman to forget her duties to her husband and family, placed her, according to the Catholic creed, in danger of eternal perdition, it will be easily imagined what a terrifying effect would be produced on his excited mind by this phantasmagoria called up in the midst of silence and solitude by a gloomy and awe-inspiring being like Rodin.

The influence thus effected on M. Hardy was at once deep and sudden, and so much the more dangerous as the Jesuit, with diabolical cunning, continued to work upon the ideas of Gabriel, merely giving them another direction to that of the young priest; for had not he pointed out to M. Hardy that nothing was more delightful, more ineffably soothing, to the wounded soul than to intercede in prayer either for those who had injured us, or those who by our means have been led into evil? Now as pardon always pre-implies previous anger and punishment, so it was that punishment which Rodin

sought to paint in such fearfully vivid characters before the eyes of his victim. With clasped hands, and fixed, terrified gaze, M. Hardy, trembling with awe and dread, seemed still to listen to Rodin, even after the latter had ceased speaking, repeating mechanically to himself, "Accursed! — accursed! — accursed!" Then all at once he exclaimed, in a species of wandering frenzy:

"I, too, shall hear myself styled accursed by the woman whom I have caused to forget her most sacred duties, whom I have rendered for ever guilty in the eyes of God, — that loved being, plunged in eternal flames, will also twist her beauteous form in agony and despair, weep tears of blood, and shout to me from the depths of the abyss whither my hand has plunged her, 'Accursed! — accursed! — accursed!' Some day," added he, with increased terror, — "some day, who knows, perhaps at this very instant, she curses me in her tortures, for this voyage may have proved fatal to her, or the waves may have wrecked the vessel in which she sailed across the ocean! Oh, God of mercy! if it be so, if she be dead, dead in guilt and sin, doomed to everlasting perdition, — and for me, for me, — have pity on her, oh, merciful Father, and expend thy just wrath on me; but pity and spare her, I — I alone am guilty, and deserve thy heaviest punishment!"

And the miserable man, almost driven mad, fell on his knees, with his hands clasped in agony.

"Sir," cried Rodin, with a tender and affectionate voice, and hastening to raise him, "my dear sir — my dear friend, be calm. Compose yourself, I should be miserable to drive you to despair. Alas! my intention is quite the contrary."

"Cursed! — cursed! She will curse me also; she whom I have adored, delivered over to the flames of hell!" murmured Hardy, trembling and appearing not to understand Rodin.

"But, my dear sir, hear me then, I entreat you,"

replied the latter. "Let me finish this history, and then you will find it as consoling as it now appears frightful to you. In the name of Heaven, recall those adorable words of your angelic Abbé Gabriel on the sweetness of prayer!"

At the soothing name of Gabriel, Hardy came to himself, and exclaimed, heart-broken:

"Ah, his words were sweet and benign! Where are they? Oh, for pity, repeat to me those holy words!"

"Our angelic Abbé Gabriel," said Rodin, "spoke of the sweetness of prayer —"

"Oh, yes, prayer."

"Well, my good sir, listen to me, and you will find that it was prayer that saved M. de Rancey, which made of him a saint. Yes, those fearful torments which I have just painted to you — those menacing visions — it is prayer that has dissipated them, changed them into heavenly delights."

"I entreat you," said M. Hardy, in an overwhelming voice, "speak to me of Gabriel — speak to me of heaven. Oh, but no more of these flames of that hell in which guilty women weep tears of blood."

"No, no," added Rodin; and as in the portraiture of hell his accent had been harsh and threatening, so it became tender and soothing as he uttered the following words: "No, no more of these images of despair, for I have said that after suffering infernal tortures, thanks to prayer, as the Abbé Gabriel told you, M. de Rancey tasted the joys of paradise."

"The joys of paradise?" repeated Hardy, listening with avidity.

"One day, in the very agony of his grief, a priest — a good priest, an Abbé Gabriel — came to M. de Rancey. Oh, happiness! oh, providence! In a few days he initiated this unhappy man in the holy mysteries of prayer, — that pious intercession of the creature towards the Creator in favour of a soul exposed to heavenly anger.

Then M. de Rancey seemed transformed, his griefs were appeased; he prayed, and the more he prayed, the more his fervour, his hope increased, — he felt that God listened to him. Instead of forgetting the woman he so adored, he passed whole hours in thinking of her, praying for her salvation. Yes, shut up with happiness in the recess of his obscure cell, alone with the adored remembrances, he passed days and nights in praying for her, in an unspeakable, excited, I might almost say amorous ecstasy."

It is impossible to render the emphasis, almost sensual, with which Rodin accentuated the word amorous.

M. Hardy shuddered with a feeling at once burning and icy; for the first time his weakened mind was struck with the idea of those sad pleasures of asceticism, of ecstasy, — that deplorable catalepsy so frequently erratic, of Ste. Thérèse, St. Aubierge, etc.

Rodin saw this and continued:

"Oh, M. de Rancey was not to be contented with a vague, unmeaning prayer said now and then in the midst of mundane disturbances, which nullify them and prevent their arrival at the ear of the Lord. No, no, in the profoundest depth of his solitude he still sought to render his prayer even more efficacious, so ardently did he desire the eternal salvation of that mistress beyond the grave!"

"What more did he do? Ah, what more did he do in his solitude?" exclaimed M. Hardy, from that moment caught in the spell of the wily Jesuit.

"In the first place," said Rodin, slowly accenting his words, "he became a — monk."

"A monk!" echoed Hardy, with a pensive air.

"Yes," replied Rodin, "he became a monk, because as such his prayer was the more favourably received by Heaven; and then, as in the depths of his undisturbed solitude his thoughts were still sometimes disturbed by the flesh, he fasted, mortified himself, subdued himself,

macerated all that was carnal within him, in order that he might become all mind, and that the prayer coming from his bosom, brilliant, pure as flame, might ascend to the Lord like the perfume of incense."

"Oh, what an intoxicating dream!" exclaimed Hardy, more and more under the spell. "In order to pray more effectually for an adored woman — to become mind, perfume, light."

"Yes, mind, perfume, light," replied Rodin, laying stress on these words; "but it is no dream. How many recluses, how many monks, have, like M. de Rancey, attained the divine ecstasy by prayers, austerities, macerations! and if you but knew the heavenly joys of these ecstasies! Thus to M. de Rancey's terrible visions succeeded (when he had become a monk) most enchanting visions. How many times, after a day of fasting and a night passed in prayers and macerations, did he sink, worn out, exhausted, on the stones of his cell! Then, after the annihilation of matter succeeded the gush of the mind; an inexpressible happiness seized on his senses, heavenly concerts reached his ravished ear, a light at once dazzling and soft, which is not of this world, penetrated through his closed eyelids; then, to the harmonious vibrations of the golden harps of the seraphs, in the midst of a circle of light to which the sun is pale, the monk saw the adored female appear —"

"That woman whom by his prayers he had at length snatched from eternal flames?" said Hardy, in a palpitating voice.

"Yes, herself," replied Rodin, with real and insinuating eloquence, for this monster spoke all languages; "and then, thanks to the prayers of her lover, which the Lord had heard, this woman no longer wept tears of blood, no more twisted her beautiful arms in infernal convulsions. No, no; still lovely, — ah, a thousand times more lovely than when on earth! Lovely with the eternal beauty of angels, — she smiled at her lover

with ineffable love, and her eyes beaming with a humid glow, she said to him in a tender and impassioned voice:

"'Glory to the Lord! Glory to thee, oh, my much adored lover! Thy ineffable prayers, thy austerities, have saved me; the Lord hath placed me amongst his elect. Glory to thee, my much-adored lover!' Then, radiant in her bliss, she stooped over him and touched with her lips, perfumed with immortality, the lips of the ecstatic monk, and then their soul exhaled itself in a kiss burning like love, chaste as virtue, immense as eternity."[1]

"Oh!" exclaimed Hardy, the prey to complete delirium, "Oh, a whole life of prayers, fastings, tortures, for such a moment with her I love, her I weep for, with her whom perhaps I have damned —"

"What do you say? Such a moment?" exclaimed Rodin, whose parchment-coloured skull was bathed with sweat, like that of a magnetiser, and taking Hardy by the hand in order to approach him more closely, as if he would have inflated him with the burning delirium in which he sought to plunge him. "It was not once in his religious life, but almost daily, that M. de Rancey, plunged into the ecstasy of a divine asceticism, tasted these deep, unutterable, unheard-of, superhuman pleasures, which are to terrestrial pleasures what eternity is to human life."

Seeing, no doubt, that Hardy had reached the point he desired, and the night being almost set in, the reverend father coughed twice or thrice in a significant manner, and looked towards the door. At this moment Hardy, at the height of his delirium, exclaimed, in a supplicating, maddened tone:

[1] It would be impossible to quote in support of this, even with any omissions, the lucubrations of the erratic delirium of Sister Thérèse, in her account of her ecstatic love for Christ. These diseases could only find place in a dictionary of medical science or in the "Compendium." (A work directed by the Jesuits. — *Eng. Trans.*) — E. S.

"A cell — a tomb — and ecstasy with her — "

The door of the chamber opened, and D'Aigrigny entered with a cloak on his arm. A servant followed him with a light in his hand.

About ten minutes after this scene, a dozen stout men, with honest, open countenances, headed by Agricola, entered the Rue de Vangirard, and bent their joyous steps towards the door of the house of the reverend fathers.

It was a deputation of the former workmen of M. Hardy, who came to fetch and thank him for consenting again to come amongst them. Agricola walked at their head. Suddenly he saw at a distance a post-carriage leave the *maison de retraite*, the horses going at a rapid pace and being urged by the postilion.

Chance or instinct, the closer this carriage approached the party, the more Agricola's mind became uneasy. The feeling became so strong that it grew at once into a terrible assurance, and at the instant when the chariot, with all its blinds closed, was about to pass him, the smith, yielding to an insurmountable presentiment, cried, as he darted to the horses' heads:

"My lads, follow me."

"Postilion — ten louis — gallop — crush him under the wheels!" uttered the military voice of D'Aigrigny from behind the blind.

The cholera was at this time raging at its height, the postilion had heard of the murder of the poisoners, and, already alarmed at Agricola's sudden assault, he gave him such a heavy blow with the handle of his whip on the head that he felled the smith to the ground, then, spurring and urging his horses to a top speed, the carriage speedily disappeared, whilst Agricola's companions, who had neither comprehended his motive nor his action, came around, and tried to restore the smith to animation.

CHAPTER VII.

A RETROSPECTIVE GLANCE.

VARIOUS occurrences had taken place during the short interval which had elapsed since the fatal evening when M. Hardy, bewildered and brought almost to the verge of madness by the highly wrought state of mind and strong mental excitement induced by the artful representations of Rodin, had with clasped hands implored D'Aigrigny to remove him far from Paris, and to conduct him to some lonely solitude where, shut out from all communication with the world, he could devote himself both in body and mind to devotional exercises and severe corporeal penance and mortification.

Maréchal Simon, since his arrival in Paris, had taken up his abode with his daughters in a plain, unpretending abode, situate in the Rue des Trois Frères. But before introducing the reader within its humble walls, we must briefly recall several circumstances to the mind of the reader.

On the day on which the fire occurred at the manufactory of M. Hardy, Maréchal Simon had gone thither for the purpose of consulting his father on an affair of the deepest importance, as well as to confide to him the painful apprehensions he entertained concerning the increasing melancholy of his two daughters, the cause of which he sought in vain to penetrate.

It may also be recollected that Maréchal Simon professed an almost religious adoration for the memory of the emperor; his gratitude towards his hero and idol had

been as boundless as his confidence was blind and unlimited, while his enthusiastic affection partook of all the deep fervour of the sincerest and most devoted friendship.

Nor was this all.

One day the emperor, in a burst of happiness and paternal tenderness, conducted the maréchal to the cradle of his sleeping infant, the young King of Rome, and, after fondly pointing out the exquisite beauty of the slumbering boy, said to him, in tones of deep emotion:

"Here, my friend, here by the side of this sweet cherub, promise me to be to the son all you have been to the father. Nay, swear!"

Maréchal Simon had both taken and kept the prescribed oath.

At the head of a military conspiracy, he had attempted during the Restoration, but in vain, to persuade a regiment of horse, then commanded by the Marquis d'Aigrigny, to join the cause of Napoleon II., but betrayed, and then denounced by the future Jesuit, the maréchal, after a sanguinary encounter with his enemy, fled into Poland, thereby alone escaping condemnation and death. It is useless recapitulating all the events which conducted the maréchal from Poland to India, and again restored him to Paris after the Revolution of July, — a period at which many of his companions in arms, unknown to himself, solicited and obtained the confirmation of the rank and title bestowed on him by the emperor previously to the battle of Waterloo. Upon his return to Paris, after so long an absence, the maréchal, spite of the happiness he felt in embracing his children, had suffered a severe shock in learning the death of his wife, to whom he was most passionately attached. Up to the very last moment, he had expected to meet her in Paris, and the disappointment struck to his heart, though he strove by every mental effort to forget his cruel, though unavailing regrets, in the gentle caresses and tender consolation of

"CONDUCTED THE MARÉCHAL TO THE CRADLE."

his young and innocent daughters. And, ere long, the fiendish machinations of Rodin added still more to the trouble and agitation which already distracted his soul.

Owing to the secret correspondence kept up by Rodin with the court of Vienna, one of his creatures, deserving of all confidence by his previous conduct, and substantiating his words still more by the most irrefragable proofs that he came from those whose authority he quoted, applied to the maréchal, saying:

"The son of our emperor is dying, a victim to the dread with which the name of his father still inspires Europe; and from this slow, lingering agony, you, Maréchal Simon, one of the most faithful friends and adherents of the emperor, may possibly be enabled to snatch the unfortunate prince. The correspondence I lay before you clearly proves that it will be both practicable and easy to establish a direct communication with the most powerful and influential personage about the King of Rome, and that this person would be favourably disposed to aid the escape of the prince. It is, then, quite possible, by means of a bold and unexpected attempt, to rescue Napoleon II. from Austria, where he is permitted to languish and waste away in an atmosphere chilling and vitally mortal to one of his delicate organisation. The enterprise is a bold, but not a hopeless one; it presents even a fair chance of success, — a success more likely to be achieved by you than another, since your devotion to the emperor is well known, and the daring bravery with which, in 1815, you joined the various conspiracies in favour of Napoleon II. is fresh in the memory of all."

The state of wasting languor in which the young King of Rome then lay was well known in France; public rumour even went so far as to affirm that the son of the hero was carefully and studiously brought up by the priests in complete ignorance of all the glory his father had achieved, and that by a vile plot they endeavoured each

day to repress and extinguish the noble and generous sentiments which so early manifested themselves in the unhappy youth; and even the coldest and most calculating natures were touched and moved at so mournful and unpromising a destiny.

When the heroic character, the chivalrous loyalty of Maréchal Simon is considered, in conjunction with his enthusiastic admiration of the emperor, it will easily be seen that the father of Rose and Blanche would be more deeply interested than any one in the fate of the young prince; and that, upon a fitting occasion, the maréchal would not confine the demonstration of his zeal and affection to a few empty professions or useless regrets.

As regarded the genuineness of the correspondence exhibited by the emissary of Rodin, it had been indirectly submitted by the maréchal to a rigid test by the means of some old connections of his, who had for many years been diplomatically employed at the court of Vienna during the time of the empire. The result of this investigation, which was, however, managed with the greatest caution for fear of exciting suspicion, served to prove that the overtures made to him merited his serious attention.

From hence arose the severe struggles and cruel perplexity which disturbed the father of Rose and Blanche; since, were he to undertake the bold and dangerous enterprise pointed out to him, he must, perforce, quit his daughters; while if, too much pained at the idea of a separation from his only treasures, he shrunk from endeavouring to save the King of Rome, whose severe sufferings and fast failing health were known and admitted by all, he became, in his own opinion, a renegade and a traitor to the promise made by him to the emperor.

To end these painful and conflicting hesitations, and full of trust and reliance on the inflexible integrity of his father, the maréchal had gone to seek his advice on the very day of the attack on M. Hardy's manufactory;

but the mortal wound received by the old republican workman had prevented his doing more than to utter, in broken and disjointed sentences, as his half benighted brain still dwelt on the affair his son had communicated to him:

"My son, — you have a great and serious duty — to perform; and to fail in it would be unworthy a man of honour, — and, as you would — wish to — obey my dying — commands — you — must — unhesitatingly —" and with these feebly uttered words, the old man expired; but by a deplorable fatality, the remaining part of the sentence, so necessary to give force and meaning to the whole, escaped in faint, unintelligible sounds; so that his death left Maréchal Simon even more embarrassed than he had been before, and a prey to an anxiety so much the more poignant as the path he should take to escape from his perplexing labyrinth had been decided on by his father, in whose judgment he had the most absolute and well-merited reliance. He passed his hours in trying to divine his parent's meaning, — whether his father had adjured him, in the sacred name of honour and of duty, not to quit his children, and to renounce a too hazardous enterprise, or if it had been intended to counsel him unhesitatingly to abandon his daughters for a time, in order that he might fulfil the vow made to the emperor, and endeavour, at least, to snatch Napoleon II. from his mortal captivity.

This perplexity, rendered still more painful by circumstances we shall narrate hereafter, the poignant grief occasioned by the sudden and violent death of his tenderly beloved parent, the unceasing and torturing anguish resulting from the recollection of his adored wife's having died far from him in a land of exile, added to the unhappiness he felt at the daily increasing sadness of Rose and Blanche, made fearful inroads into the health and energy of Maréchal Simon. Let it be further remarked, that, spite of his natural intrepidity, so bravely

manifested during twenty years spent in war, the ravages of the cholera — that terrible malady to which his wife had fallen a victim in Siberia — created a sort of involuntary dread in the mind of the man who, during so many hard-fought battles, had coolly looked on death, yet who now felt his habitual firmness fail him at the sight of the desolation and misery he encountered at every step in Paris.

Meanwhile, Mlle. de Cardoville had contrived to assemble around her the various members of her family, with the view of putting them on their guard against the machinations of their enemies, and the affectionate tenderness lavished by her on Rose and Blanche appeared to exercise so happy an influence on their mysterious melancholy that the maréchal, forgetting for awhile his painful subjects of thought, gave himself up to the dear delight of enjoying this gratifying change, — a change, alas! but of too short a duration.

These circumstances recalled to the recollection of our readers, and the requisite explanations given, we will now proceed with our recital.

CHAPTER VIII.

JOCRISSE.

Marechal Simon occupied, as we have already said, a quiet, unpretending mansion in the Rue des Trois Frères. Two o'clock, midday, had just struck on the clock in the maréchal's bedchamber, a room furnished with a simplicity entirely military. At the head of the bed was a stand of arms composed of the various accoutrements worn by the maréchal during his several campaigns; while on the bookcase, which faced the bed, was a small bronze bust of the emperor, the only ornament the apartment contained.

The temperature without the chamber was far from being warm, and the maréchal, from his long residence in India, was particularly sensitive of cold; a good fire, therefore, was blazing on the hearth. A door, concealed by the hangings of the room, and communicating with a back staircase, slowly opened, and a man appeared bearing a basket of wood; this individual advanced slowly till he reached the fireplace, when, stooping down, he began to arrange the blocks of wood in symmetrical order in a large box placed a little way from the fire; after pursuing his occupation for several minutes, the man, still on his knees, continued insensibly to approach a second door, not far from the chimneypiece, where he appeared to listen with profound attention, as if desirous of ascertaining whether any person was speaking in the adjoining apartment.

This man, employed throughout the house as a sort of supernumerary servant, had the most ridiculously stupid aspect that can be imagined; his duties consisted in carrying wood to the different rooms, going of errands, etc.; moreover, he served as a jest and make-game for every domestic in the house. In a momentary fit of gaiety, Dagobert, who exercised in the house a sort of majordomo capacity, had bestowed on the idiotic fellow the name of Jocrisse, which he had ever afterwards retained, and certainly never was *sobriquet* better placed as regarded the stupidity of the man, with his flat, unmeaning face, great snub nose, and large, dull, fishy-looking eyes; add to this a dress consisting of the usual nether garments, and a red serge waistcoat, finished off with a white bib belonging to an apron of the same colour, and the reader may form some idea of the simpleton so aptly and justly named Jocrisse. Nevertheless, as the man crouched down before the door of the adjoining chamber, and seemed to be paying such close attention to what might be passing within, a bright sparkle of intelligence shone in those eyes usually so dull and stupid.

After having thus listened for an instant or two at the door, Jocrisse returned to the fireplace, still drawing himself along on his knees; then rising, he took his basket, half filled as it was with wood, and again approached the door before which he had been listening, and gently tapped at it. No one answered him. A second time he knocked, and more boldly; still no reply. Then speaking in a voice as hoarse, squeaking, grating, and ridiculous as can be imagined, he said:

"Please, young ladies, are you in any want of wood for your chimbley, if you please?"

Receiving no answer, Jocrisse put down his basket, opened the door softly, and entered the adjoining chamber; after casting a rapid glance around, in two or three seconds he came out again, looking anxiously from side

to side, like a person who had just accomplished some very important and mysterious thing. Resuming his wood-basket, he was just preparing to quit the maréchal's bedchamber, when the door leading to the back staircase again slowly and cautiously opened, and Dagobert appeared there.

Evidently surprised at the presence of Jocrisse, the old soldier frowned angrily, and abruptly inquired, "What are you doing there?"

At this sudden demand, accompanied by a deep growl, arising out of the ill-humour which at that moment affected Killjoy, who was closely following his master, Jocrisse uttered a cry of terror, real or affected; if the latter, he, by way of giving greater effect to his emotion, contrived to upset his load of wood on the floor, as though fear or surprise had caused it to slip from his hands.

"What are you doing there, booby?" pursued Dagobert, whose countenance bore marks of extreme sadness, and as though his present turn of mind was ill calculated to relish the foolery of Jocrisse.

"Ah, M. Dagobert, how you did frighten me, to be sure! Oh, dear! Oh, dear! What a pity I was not carrying a pile of plates, just that I might have had the pleasure of proving that it was not my fault that they were all thrown down and broken!"

"I ask you what you were doing there?" persisted Dagobert.

"Why, M. Dagobert, it's pretty plain what I was a doing, — just look'ee there," pointing to his basket. "I have just been bringing wood into the chamber of my lord duke, 'cos, says I, if he's cold, and wants to warm hisself, if he hasn't got no wood, why, he can't burn it! And I'm sure, it is downright cold, and no mistake, — indeed, according as I hear say — "

"There, that will do, — pick up your things, and be off with you."

"Lord love you, M. Dagobert, my legs quite tremble

under me. Dear, dear me, what a fright you gave me surely!"

"Will you take yourself out of the way, you great, stupid brute?"

Then taking Jocrisse by the arm, he pushed him against the door, while Killjoy, laying back his sharp-pointed ears, and bristling up his coat like the quills of a porcupine, evinced every disposition to accelerate the retreat of the idiotic-looking being.

"I'm a-going, M. Dagobert, — bless your dear heart, I'm a-going," replied the simpleton, hastily picking up his basket; "but will you have the goodness just to mention to M. Killjoy, that I'd rather — if he pleases —"

"Go to the —— with you, you chattering old fool!" cried Dagobert, turning Jocrisse out of the apartment. The old man then bolted the door of the back staircase withinside, and, proceeding to that which led to the chamber of the sisters, turned the key in the lock. This done, the soldier hastily approached the alcove, and took down from the panoply of arms suspended at the head, a pair of loaded pistols, from which he carefully removed the percussion-caps, then, with a deep sigh, he returned them to their original place; he was leaving the spot, when, as if actuated by some fresh idea, he again extended his hand towards the stand of arms, and took from it an Indian kandjiar (or poniard, with an extremely sharp and pointed blade), drew it from its golden sheath, and broke off the end of this deadly weapon by pressing it beneath one of the iron castors which supported the bed. Dagobert then unfastened the doors he had previously secured, and returned with slow and lingering steps towards the fireplace, leaning his arm on the mantelpiece, with an air at once pensive and dejected; while Killjoy, stretched out before the fire, followed, with an attentive eye, the least movement of his master, — the noble brute even sought to attract his attention by a fresh proof of the wonderful sagacity

with which he was endowed, for the old soldier, in drawing out his pocket-handkerchief, unconsciously let fall a small roll of tobacco.

Killjoy, who fetched and carried like a retriever of the Rutland breed, took the paper up, and holding it between his teeth seated himself on his hind legs, and, with all possible respect and attention, presented it to Dagobert, who, wholly absorbed in his deep and painful ruminations, took it mechanically, without seeming to feel either pleasure or interest in the cleverness of his faithful dog.

The countenance of the old man expressed as much grief as anxiety, and, after remaining for some time beside the fire in the same meditative attitude, he began pacing the room in extreme agitation, one hand thrust into the bosom of his long blue greatcoat buttoned up to the chin, the other in one of the back pockets.

From time to time Dagobert suddenly paused, and, as if in reply to his secret thoughts, uttered aloud some exclamation of doubt or surprise; then, turning towards the pile of military trophies, he mournfully shook his head as he murmured:

"No matter! Very possibly my fear is unfounded and absurd; but still he has been so very strange during the last two days. At any rate it is more prudent." And again resuming his march up and down the apartment, Dagobert said, after a fresh and prolonged silence, "I must make him tell me what it is that thus presses on his mind. He makes me too unhappy to be able longer to bear it in silence. And then, again, when I think of those dear girls, it almost breaks my heart."

And, with these words, Dagobert rapidly smoothed his moustache between his thumb and forefinger with an almost convulsive movement, which, in him, was invariably the index of some powerful internal agitation.

After another pause of several minutes, the old soldier, as though replying to some inward thought, exclaimed:

"What can it be, if not that? Surely not more anonymous letters? They are too base and unworthy to be capable of thus changing him. No, no, he despises all that sort of mean, cowardly, fighting-in-the-dark work! I'm sure he does. No, no, there is some other reason for all his misery; and that reason I must and will find out."

And, as if wound up to fresh excitement, Dagobert began pacing the room more energetically than ever.

Suddenly Killjoy pricked up his ears, turned his head in the direction of the back staircase, and growled fiercely.

A few minutes afterwards some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" inquired Dagobert.

No reply was given, but the knocking was repeated.

Irritated and impatient, the old soldier hastily opened the door, and beheld the stolid countenance of Jocrisse.

"What the —— do you mean," asked the angry soldier, "by not answering when I spoke to you?"

"M. Dagobert, if you please, I was afraid, because, you know as you sent me away just now, I was in fear of making you angry if I told you it was me come back again!"

"And what have you come for? What do you want? But don't stand staring there, you gaping fool, if you have any business to do. Be quick, and take your stupid carcass out of my way. Do you hear me, you lout? Why don't you move one way or the other? Then I'll make you!" added Dagobert, wrought up to a paroxysm of fury, and forcibly dragging Jocrisse into the midst of the chamber, finding the man persisted in remaining on the threshold of the door.

"I'm a-coming! I'm a-coming directly, I am, M. Dagobert! Pray don't be so very cross to me, you make me ill; you do, indeed, when you speak. I always was afraid of thunder, when I was quite a little boy, and

ever since. There, there, now don't fly out again, I'm a-going to speak directly I can get my words together. I came, M. Dagobert, to tell you — oh, dear me, how I do tremble! — that there was a young man — "

"Well?"

"Who says he wants to speak to you directly, M. Dagobert, if you please, sir."

"And what is his name?"

"Ah, now I know you are laughing at me, M. Dagobert," answered Jocrisse, twisting himself about with a silly and idiotic look and manner. "When you ask me his name, then I'm sure you are mocking of me!"

"Why, you half brained simpleton, you seem determined to make me shake the wretched breath out of your body! Come, come, no more of this fool's nonsense, or I shall be as good as my word," cried the soldier, seizing Jocrisse by the collar. "Will you tell me the name of this young man, or must I shake it out of you?"

"M. Dagobert, you hurt me! Please take your knuckles out of my throat, and I'll tell you all I know. I will, indeed; only don't look so horrid and speak so violent. As for the name of the young man, I thought it was not worth while mentioning it, as you know it already as well or better than myself."

"Oh, you brute, beast!" exclaimed Dagobert, shaking his fists in his face. "I'll make you remember crossing my path with your cock and bull tales, when I'm so little in the humour to have patience with you or myself either. What do you mean by saying I know the name of this young man?"

"Well, la! I beg pardon, I'm sure. It was my mistake; only I thought it most likely you did, as it was your own son! He's down below, and he says he wants to see you, and speak to you about something very particular, this very identical minute."

So well did Jocrisse enact his part of simpleton that

Dagobert was completely deceived by it; and pitying, rather than resenting, the folly of the man, he looked for an instant searchingly into his countenance, but, finding nothing in the utter stolidity of Jocrisse's face to arouse his suspicions, he merely shrugged his shoulders, and, directing his steps towards the staircase, contented himself with saying to the man:

"Follow me!"

Jocrisse obeyed; but, before closing the door after him, he felt in his pocket, drew from it a letter with a cautious and mysterious air, which he threw behind him; then, without turning his head, and speaking all the while to Dagobert to divert his attention, he said:

"Your son is in the courtyard, M. Dagobert; he wouldn't come up, he said — so, I take it, that's the reason he stayed down-stairs."

So saying, Jocrisse shut the door, believing the letter lay where he left it, namely, on the floor in Maréchal Simon's bedchamber. But Jocrisse had not included Killjoy in his calculations. Whether he considered it more prudent to bring up the rear, or whether from respectful deference to the two-legged animal who preceded him, the sagacious dog had not chosen to quit the room till all had departed but himself; and, as he was extraordinarily clever at fetching and carrying (as has been already stated), when he saw Jocrisse drop the letter, he took it carefully up, and, holding it between his teeth, followed the man who had thrown the paper on the ground, without his having the least suspicion of this fresh act of intelligence and good manners on the part of Killjoy.

CHAPTER IX.

THE ANONYMOUS CORRESPONDENTS.

We shall hereafter relate what became of the letter so cleverly conveyed in the jaws of Killjoy, as well as his reason for not following his master when the latter ran to welcome his dear Agricola.

Dagobert had seen nothing of his son for several days, and first cordially and affectionately welcoming him, he led him into the two chambers on the ground floor assigned as his residence.

"And how is your wife?" inquired the old soldier, as soon as they were seated.

"Thank you, father, she is quite well."

The tone in which Agricola replied to his father's question was so unlike his natural manner of speaking that Dagobert involuntarily raised his eyes to his face, and, for the first time, observed the powerful emotion depicted on his features.

"What is the matter, my boy?" asked the anxious parent. "Has anything new or unfortunate occurred since I saw you last?"

"Father," answered the young smith, in despairing accents, "all is over, — he is lost to us for ever!"

"Of whom are you speaking?"

"Of M. Hardy!"

"M. Hardy! Why, three days ago you told me that you were going to see him by his own wish."

"And I did go, father, in company with my dear and excellent brother, Gabriel. We both had an interview

with him, and Gabriel talked to him — oh, in such a way, it would have melted a stone, till at length, by his animating and encouraging words, M. Hardy was brought to declare his intention of returning to us all again. Quite wild with joy, I ran to convey the happy tidings to some of my companions, who were waiting to know the result of my conference with M. Hardy, and they all hurried back with me to thank and bless their kind benefactor for thus restoring them to happiness and employment. We were within about a hundred steps of the black gownsmen's house, when —"

"You mean priests, I suppose," said Dagobert, with a gloomy air. "Ah, I thought they must needs be concerned wherever evil and mischief were going on. Come, let's hear what fresh misfortunes occurred; something fatal, I'm sure. I know those religious mischief-makers too well!"

"You are not mistaken in this case certainly, father," said Agricola, with a sigh. "Well, as I said before, I was hurrying with my comrades, when, all at once, I perceived a travelling carriage approach from the priests' house, and an indescribable impression came over my mind that they were carrying off M. Hardy."

"Do you mean by force?" asked Dagobert, eagerly.

"Oh, no!" replied Agricola, bitterly; "these men are too clever and cunning for that. They always find some means or other of rendering you a willing instrument in their guilty hands — a voluntary aider and abettor in your own ruin. I have not forgotten how they went to work with my dear mother."

"Ah, poor woman! She was another unhappy fly caught in their treacherous, poisoned net. But what of the carriage you were telling me about?"

"As I saw it drive from the priests' house," said Agricola, "a pang shot through my heart, and, by an impulse I felt it impossible to restrain, I sprung to the horses' heads, calling upon my companions to aid me,

but the postilion aimed a blow at me with his whip, which stretched me senseless on the ground, and by the time I recovered myself the vehicle was far off."

"But you received no serious injury, my son, I trust!" exclaimed Dagobert, eagerly, whilst he attentively and anxiously surveyed Agricola.

"No, dear father; the blow had merely stunned me, and I escaped with a slight scratch or a bruise."

"And what did you do next, my lad?"

"Why, I made all possible haste to our guardian angel, Mlle. de Cardoville, and related to her all that had occurred. 'You must follow M. Hardy instantly,' said she, when I had concluded my tale. 'You shall have one of my travelling carriages with post-horses. M. Dupont will accompany you, and you will pursue M. Hardy from stage to stage, and if you are fortunate enough to overtake him, it is possible that your presence and entreaties may overcome the fatal influence these priests have obtained over him.'"

"The excellent young lady was quite right. It was the very best thing that you could do."

"An hour after that we were on M. Hardy's track, for we learnt, by some return postilions we met, that he had taken the road to Orleans. We followed as far as Estampes, where we heard that he had gone, by a cross-road, towards a lone house, situated in a valley about four leagues from the highroad; that this house was called the Vale of St. Herem, and belonged to the priests. But the night was so dark and the roads so very bad, that we were counselled to sleep at the inn, and depart upon our search at break of day; and this advice we determined to follow. Directly it was light we started off again, and, after proceeding for about a quarter of an hour by the road, we quitted it for a by-path, as precipitous as dreary and desolate. Nothing was to be seen but immense blocks of graystone, with a few birch-trees and stunted shrubs scattered over them. As we advanced the aspect

of the country became still more wild and dreary. You might easily suppose yourself one hundred leagues from Paris. At length we stopped before a large, dark-looking old mansion, built at the declivity of a high mountain, covered with patches of the graystone which I mentioned to you abounded so much in the neighbourhood. There were scarcely any windows in this gloomy abode, and what there were were so small and high that the inmates could never, by any possibility, guess what was passing without. Never, during my life, have I seen anything so lonely and dismal-looking. We alighted and rang at the bell, which was promptly answered by a man-servant. 'Did not the Abbé d'Aigrigny arrive here last night with another gentleman?' I asked, with an air of extreme intelligence. 'Let that gentleman know that I wish to see him directly upon an affair of great importance, and that I beg he will allow me to state my business to him without delay.' The man believing, of course, that we belonged to the Abbé d'Aigrigny's party, allowed us to enter. In about a minute a door opened, and the Abbé d'Aigrigny appeared. At sight of me he started back and retreated as quickly as he had come; but in about five minutes' time I was in M. Hardy's presence."

"Well!" said Dagobert, anxiously; "then I suppose you made it all right?"

Agricola mournfully shook his head, then resumed:

"I saw, at the first glance, that all was over with M. Hardy; the expression of his features told me that plainly enough. Addressing himself to me, in a voice gentle but firm, M. Hardy said, 'I can both understand and excuse the motive that brings you here, but I have finally resolved to pass the remainder of my life in retirement and devotion. I take this determination willingly and of my own free will, uninfluenced by any person, because I believe my immortal happiness and the state of my soul require it. Bear my good wishes to your comrades, and say that I have made such a provision for them as will, I trust,

reconcile them to my loss, and secure me a place in their remembrance.' Then, perceiving me about to speak, M. Hardy interrupted me by saying, 'It is all in vain, my good friend, my resolution is fixed and unchangeable. Do not write me, for, if you do, your letters will remain unanswered. My whole attention will, henceforward, be engrossed by prayer and meditation. And now farewell! Excuse my quitting you, but I am much fatigued with travelling.' And he might well refer to his being unhinged and indisposed, whether from travelling or other causes. He was pale as a spectre, and there even seemed to me a sort of wandering and wildness in his eyes. In fact, he was scarcely like the same person I had seen and conversed with only the day previously, while the hand he held out to me was parched and burning. The Abbé d'Aigrigny now entered. 'Father,' said M. Hardy to him, 'will you do me the favour to conduct M. Agricola Baudoin to the door?' With these words he waved his hand to me, in token of an eternal adieu, and entered an adjoining chamber. All was now over, and he for ever and irrevocably lost to the world and those who loved him as I did."

"I see," said Dagobert, "these black-coated priests have bewitched him, as they have done so many others."

"So then," said Agricola, "I returned home in utter despair in company with M. Dupont. See, now, what these priests have made of M. Hardy, the generous individual who maintained nearly three hundred workmen, and induced them, by the excellence of his system, to live an industrious, orderly life, cultivating their intelligence, improving their hearts, and rendering himself, by his wise and beneficent conduct towards them, well worthy of the blessings they daily, nay hourly, invoked on his head. Instead of all this useful benevolence, M. Hardy has now for ever devoted himself to a silent, solitary life, useless to himself as well as to all around him."

"Oh, these priests," said Dagobert, shuddering, and

unable to conceal an undefinable dread he felt creeping over him; "the more I know of them, the more they inspire me with fear. You saw how those black hypocrites turned and twirled your poor mother's mind, till, unconsciously to herself, she was made to aid in their vile projects. Now, you see to what they have brought M. Hardy. You are aware of their infamous schemes against my two poor orphans, as well as that noble-minded, generous young lady. Oh, those men are cunning as the devil himself, and I tell you honestly, Agricola, I had much rather face a squadron of Russian grenadiers than a dozen of those cassocks. Don't let us talk of them any more. I have plenty of other causes for fear and uneasiness without them."

Then, observing the surprise imprinted on Agricola's expressive features, the old soldier, unable longer to restrain his emotion, threw himself into his son's arms, crying, in a hurried, agitated voice:

"I can bear it no longer! My heart overflows, and in whom can I repose my sorrows and my confidence, if not in you, my son?"

"You terrify me, father," said Agricola. "What has happened?"

"I tell you, my boy, that, only for you and those two poor orphan girls, I should have been tempted, twenty times over, to blow my brains out, rather than to see what I see, and, above all, to fear what I fear!"

"And what is it you do fear, dear father?"

"I know not what has been the matter with the maréchal; but, for several days past, he has alarmed me greatly!"

"Yet his recent conversations with Mlle. de Cardoville —"

"Certainly did him good, and, for a time, he appeared considerably improved in spirits and manner. The generous young lady seemed, by her kind and soothing words, to have poured healing balm into his wounds. And the

presence of the young Indian had also served to divert his thoughts. He appeared less gloomy, less melancholy, and his poor children enjoyed all the good effects of so blessed a change; but for several days past it seems as though some demon were let loose afresh to distract and torment the whole family; it well-nigh turns my brain, and I feel almost certain that the sending of anonymous letters, which had been discontinued, has again commenced." [1]

"What letters do you allude to, father?"

"The anonymous ones."

"And what is the purport of these letters?"

"You are aware of the hatred the maréchal previously entertained for that renegade, Abbé d'Aigrigny. When he learnt that the traitor was here, and that he had pursued the orphan children with the same bitter and implacable enmity he had manifested towards their unfortunate mother, hunting her even to death, but that he had become a priest, and, consequently, escaped from his vengeance, I thought the maréchal would go mad with rage and indignation. He even threatened to seek out the traitor, the renegade, and pin him to the earth with his sword; but I calmed him with a single word. 'He has turned priest, remember,' said I, 'and you may cross his path, insult, or even strike him, but he will neither return your blow nor meet you like a man. He

[1] It is well known how familiar the reverend fathers, as well as other sects, are with the employment of denunciating threats and anonymous slander. The venerable Cardinal de Latour d'Auvergne has complained recently, in a letter addressed to the different journals, of the disgraceful attacks and numerous anonymous letters with which he has been assailed, because he refused a blind and unqualified obedience to the prohibition of M. de Bonald against the "Manuel" of M. Dupin, a work which, spite of party or priesthood, will for ever remain a compendium of reason, right, and independence. We have now before us the particulars, nay, the very documents, of an action at law, referred even to the *conseil d'état*, in which were produced a considerable number of anonymous letters, addressed to an aged man the priests were desirous of getting into their clutches, containing the most fearful threats if he did not disinherit his nephews, as well as the most abominable accusations and imputations against each member of his honourable family. It further came out on the trial that these anonymous letters were the productions of two priests and a professed nun, who never quitted the old man, even in his last moments, and ultimately succeeded in despoiling the family of more than five hundred thousand francs.

began by fighting against his country, and he finishes by becoming a wicked and hypocritical priest. Trust me, he is not worthy of being spit upon or spurned with your foot!' 'Still, still,' exclaimed the exasperated maréchal, 'I cannot rest till I have at once avenged my children's wrongs and my wife's death.' 'You must remember,' said I again, 'that you have been assured that there are laws and tribunals in France capable of punishing him as he deserves. Mlle. de Cardoville has already lodged a complaint against him for having illegally, and with evil intent, confined your children in a convent. We must, therefore, wait in patience, but our revenge will only be the more certain.'"

"Yes, father, you were right in urging all this to the poor maréchal; but, unfortunately, there are no direct proofs against the Abbé d'Aigrigny. Why, only the other day, when Mlle. de Cardoville's solicitor questioned me respecting our going to the convent that night, he told me plainly that he found fresh difficulties every step he advanced in the affair, for want of positive and material proofs, and that the priests had taken their measures so skilfully that he fully expected the charge would fall to the ground!"

"That is precisely the maréchal's own opinion, my lad; and the idea of so flagrant an injustice irritates him still more."

"It is a pity he cannot view the conduct of these unprincipled men with the contempt it deserves!"

"And the anonymous letters, also. Would you despise them also?"

"Father, I do not understand your reference to these letters."

"Then listen, while I explain the whole matter to you. Brave and generous-minded as is the maréchal, when his first burst of indignation had passed away, he considered that to chastise the renegade as he deserved, now he had converted his military garb into a priest's frock,

would be almost as cowardly as to attack a woman or an old man. He therefore endeavoured, as much as possible, to despise and forget the wrongs he had received; but, lo! by every post arrived letters from some concealed writer, endeavouring, by every possible means, to rekindle and excite the anger of the maréchal against the renegade, by recapitulating all the injuries both himself and those dearest to him had received from the Abbé d'Aigrigny; and many bitter taunts and cutting remarks were made on the cowardice of the maréchal, who could allow insults and wrongs, such as he had sustained, to go unpunished, while the persecutor of his wife and children daily indulged in the most insolent jests and contemptuous observations concerning the maréchal, his late wife, and even his children!"

"And have you the least suspicion, father, as to the sender of these letters?"

"None whatever! I think and think, till I go almost out of my senses with puzzling my brain, and all to no purpose."

"They come, doubtless, from the maréchal's enemies, and he has no foes but those priests."

"That is my opinion."

"But what can be the aim and motive of these vile anonymous scrawls?"

"The motive?" exclaimed Dagobert. "Why, that is clear enough. The maréchal is quick, hasty, impetuous, and has a thousand reasons for seeking to revenge them on the renegade. Now he is prevented doing himself justice, and justice from his country he is unable to obtain for want of more positive proofs than he possesses. Thus foiled, then, in what he so deeply thirsted for, he powerfully controlled his feelings, and tried to forget the past; but, behold, each day brings insolently provoking letters, that cannot fail recalling this just hatred on the part of the maréchal, whose sensitive mind is goaded on with insults, abuse, and mockery no man could

stand. I tell you what, my brain is as strong as most people's, but I know this kind of torment would drive me actually mad!"

"It is, indeed, a scheme worthy of hell itself, and one that only a fiend could have concocted."

"And that is not all, either!"

"Not all? Surely the base persecuting of his enemies can go no further?"

"Each day the maréchal receives other letters, but those he does not allow me to see; but, when the first came, he seemed dreadfully affected, and said, in a low voice, 'This is too much — too much! They do not even respect — ' and then, covering his face with his hands, he burst into tears!"

"Is it possible?" exclaimed the smith, almost disbelieving what he heard; "could any cause make the maréchal weep?"

"I tell you, Agricola," resumed Dagobert, "that, upon the receipt of the letter I was speaking of, he cried like a child!"

"What could those letters have contained, father?"

"I know not. Neither durst I inquire. But he looked so wretched and despairing that my heart seemed ready to burst."

"Alas, tormented and harassed in this merciless way, the life of the maréchal must be a burden to him!"

"And then, again, the sight of his poor children, whom he observes more and more dejected and depressed each day, without it being possible to guess the cause of their unhappiness, added to the recollection of his father expiring in his arms, it is enough to break down one man's fortitude, I should think, eh? Still I feel perfectly persuaded that I do not yet know all the maréchal's causes of suffering. There is something, even worse than I have related to you, which preys on his mind, and drives him nearly to desperation. He is completely altered, both in looks, character, and manner, and for

the last few days he has given way to the most violent bursts of passion and fury without any cause or reason that even he could assign. Indeed," continued the old soldier, after a brief hesitation, "I know I may trust you, my son, and therefore I will candidly confess that, in consequence of my fears, I have just now been to the maréchal's apartment for the purpose of removing the caps from his pistols!"

"Oh, father!" exclaimed Agricola, infinitely distressed at what he heard, "could you then have dreaded —"

"After the violently excited and exasperated state he was in all yesterday, I dread everything!"

"Why, what occurred then?"

"For some time past he has had long and secret interviews with an individual, whose appearance was that of an old soldier, as well as a brave and worthy sort of man; and I have remarked that the maréchal has always appeared more depressed and agitated after the visits of this person. Two or three times I ventured to remark something of the kind to the maréchal, but, as I saw it displeased him, I did not venture further. Well, this very individual came again in the evening, and staid here till nearly eleven o'clock, even till his wife came to seek him, and waited for him in a hackney-coach at the door. Directly he had left I went up to the maréchal to see if he wanted anything. He looked very pale, but seemed calm; and, when I spoke to him, thanked me, but declined my services, and I went down-stairs again. You know that my bedroom at the side here is directly underneath his, and, for some time after I returned to my chamber, I could hear the maréchal pacing to and fro, as though under the influence of some powerful agitation. At length it seemed as if he were knocking over and throwing the furniture about with violence. Much alarmed, I hurried up-stairs again; but, when I entered the room, he seemed extremely angry with me for coming, and sternly bade me begone

immediately! Seeing him in this state I thought it dangerous to leave him, and accordingly I stopped as if I had not heard what he said. He got into a furious rage, but still I did not offer to go. I only pointed to the table and chair he had thrown down, and which were lying on the ground, with an air so mournful and full of concern that he understood me, and, being one of the best and noblest natures that ever lived, he took my hand, and said, 'Forgive me, my good Dagobert, for paining you thus, but I had, just now, so fierce a rage upon me, that, in a moment's folly, I might have done any desperate act. Nay, I verily believe I should have thrown myself through the window had it been open. I only trust my poor dear little girls did not hear me; but, indeed, my head was quite turned for a time.' Then, going on tiptoe, he walked to the door of the room which led to the sleeping-chamber of his daughters. After anxiously and attentively listening for a minute, he returned to me, saying, 'All is still — thank heaven they sleep!' I then ventured to inquire what had so much disturbed him, and if, spite of all my precautions, he had received another anonymous letter. 'No!' answered he, with a gloomy air, 'I have not! But leave me now, my good friend, I feel better; the sight of you has done me good. So good night, old companion and worthy comrade; retire to your bed and sleep, as I mean to do.' You may be very sure I did not go far off; but, for fear of irritating him, I made believe to go down-stairs, but I walked up again without my shoes, and took my station at the top of the stairs, listening to every sound. No doubt with a view of effectually composing his mind, the maréchal went to look at his sleeping daughters, and, perhaps, bestow a kiss on their innocent foreheads, for I heard the door leading to their apartment open and shut. After his return from their chamber, he continued for a long while to walk up and down his room, but in a calmer manner;

then, as if quite tired out, I heard him throw himself on his bed. I kept my watch, however, till daybreak, and then, finding all remained quiet, I gently stole back to my room, feeling comforted to think that, as far as I could judge, he had passed a tranquil night."

"But what can be the matter with him, dear father?"

"I know no more than you do. But, when I went to him in the morning, I was struck with the change in his countenance, and the bright, unnatural sort of glitter in his eyes. He could not have looked worse if he had been suffering from madness, or a raging fever; then, remembering what he had said the evening previously, that if the window had been open he should have thrown himself out, I thought it would be more prudent to remove the caps from his pistols."

"I cannot understand it," said Agricola; "for a man so firm, so intrepid, and habitually so calm and self-possessed as the maréchal, to have these unaccountable fits of violence, indicates some dark mystery time only can unravel."

"I tell you something most extraordinary is passing in his mind. He has not seen his children for the last two days, which is always a bad sign with him; while the two sweet girls are fretting and pining at the idea of having offended him in some manner, and unconsciously displeased him, and the bare idea of this increases their previous sadness. But for two such angelic beings as they are to give offence to any one is wholly impossible. Ah, if you only knew what a life those dear children lead,—a walk out with me, or a drive in the carriage with the person who has charge of them, for I never allow them to go out alone, and then, upon their return, they attend to their studies, read, or embroider, but always together, till they retire to bed. Their preceptress, whom I believe to be a very worthy woman, told me that she had often been disturbed during the night by hearing them sobbing in their sleep.

Poor children! Thus, in their young lives, certainly they have not enjoyed much happiness," said the soldier, with a sigh.

At this moment, hearing rapid steps in the courtyard, Dagobert looked up, and beheld Maréchal Simon, with pale, distorted features, and half frenzied air, holding in his hands a letter, the contents of which he seemed to read with intense anxiety and extreme agitation.

CHAPTER X.

THE GOLDEN CITY.

WHILE Maréchal Simon was pacing the garden with a hasty and agitated step, while engaged in the perusal of the anonymous letter received so singularly through the medium of Killjoy, his daughters sat alone in the apartment they usually occupied, and to which during their temporary absence Jocrisse had paid a brief visit. The poor girls seemed doomed to wear the "livery of woe," for, just as their mourning for their mother terminated, the tragical death of their grandfather again covered them with funereal crape.

The sisters, dressed in deep black, were sitting upon a sofa near their work-table. Grief frequently produces the effect of years, and adds to our outward appearance of age. So it was with Rose and Blanche, a few months had converted them into young women and changed the almost child-like beauty of their fair young faces, once so round and rosy, into pale, lengthened countenances, whose careworn expression rendered it almost impossible to believe they were the same gay, light-hearted beings they had been previous to quitting Siberia. Their large, clear blue eyes were no longer visited by those tears of exuberant joy, caused by their merry laugh either at the amusing coolness and imperturbability of Dagobert, or the mute drollery of old Killjoy, whose pranks frequently enlivened their long and fatiguing pilgrimage. In a word, these charming young creatures, whose soft and delicate loveliness none but the pencil of a Greuze could

have fitly described, were, as they then sat and looked, well worthy of inspiring the melancholy genius of the immortal painter of "Mignon regretting Heaven," or "Marguerite meditating on Faust."

Rose, leaning against the back of the sofa, sat with her head partly drooping on her bosom, over which was crossed a black crape handkerchief, while the light of an opposite window shone full on her pure white forehead, surmounted by a double plaiting of rich chestnut hair; her look was fixed, and the contraction of her finely arched eyebrow evinced the deep preoccupation of her mind; her small, delicate, but thin and wasted hands, still holding the morsel of embroidery with which she had attempted to amuse herself, had fallen listlessly on her lap. The side-face of Blanche was alone visible as she bent forwards to her sister with an expression of tender yet anxious solicitude. Continuing to gaze on her, while she mechanically passed her needle through the canvass she was engaged upon, as though still occupied with her work, "Sister dear!" said Blanche, in a sweet and gentle voice, after waiting a few seconds during which the tears might be seen rapidly gathering in her eyes, "tell me what you are thinking of? You seem so very sad!"

"I was thinking," replied Rose, in a slow tone, and after a short silence, "of the golden city — of our dreams and fancies!"

Blanche comprehended all the bitterness contained in these words, and, without saying another word, she threw her arms around her sister's neck, and burst into tears.

Poor children! The golden city of which they had so long talked and dreamed was Paris and their father, — Paris, the marvellous city of joys and fêtes innumerable; and their imagination had portrayed the smiling, happy countenance of their beloved parent as he welcomed them to the festive scene. But, alas, for them! This gay, golden city had been converted into the drear

abode of grief and tears, death and mourning; the dreadful scourge which had struck their mother in the wilds of Siberia appeared to have followed them like a dark, threatening cloud, and, hovering still over their heads, seemed perpetually to exclude from them the soft blue of the heavens, or the cheering rays of the sun. And the golden city of their fond picturing displayed before their mental view the day when their father should present to them two claimants for their affection, handsome and good as themselves, saying as he did so:

"Here, my children, are hearts worthy of your own; these youths love you as you deserve to be loved. Let each sister, then, bestow a tender and affectionate brother on the other, while, by giving your hand as I direct, I shall be enabled to boast of my sons, as I have hitherto proudly done of my daughters."

And, then, how bright a blush tinged the cheek of the orphans, whose souls, pure as the transparent crystal, had never before reflected any image but that of the angel Gabriel sent by their mother to protect and guard them. It may, therefore, be well imagined with how painful an emotion Blanche heard her sister murmur in bitter sadness those words which so painfully described the difference between their real position and that their imaginations had promised them.

"Alas! dear Rose," said Blanche, wiping away the tears which trickled down her sister's cheek, as she replied, "I was thinking of the golden city we hoped to find; maybe we shall be happy yet, after all!"

"Oh, no," said Rose, "hope it not, sister; for since, though blessed with our father's presence, we find ourselves unhappy, how can we ever hope to be otherwise than wretched?"

"I'll tell you when we shall, dearest Rose," answered Blanche, raising her soft, bright blue eyes to heaven, "we shall be quite — quite happy when we go to rejoin our dear mother; shall we not, think you?"

"And, possibly, the dream we have just had, like the dream we had before, when we were in Germany, is intended to announce to us what is about to happen. Only you know, sister dear, there was this difference, that in Germany we dreamed that the angel Gabriel descended from heaven to come to us; and this time he fetched us from this earth, and carried us to the skies, where our mother was waiting for us."

"Probably this dream will come true, like the other, dear sister; for we dreamed then that the angel Gabriel would protect us, and did he not come and deliver us during the dreadful storm when the ship was wrecked? And this time we dreamed that he took us up to heaven, why should not that also come to pass?"

"Why, you see, sister, that, before he can descend from heaven to take us to our mother, he must first die himself; and it is too dreadful even to think that the dear, good Gabriel who saved us from the tempest should die. I can't bear even to hear you hint at it; let us both kneel down and pray that such a great misfortune may not happen."

"Oh, but that need not happen, because you know that it was not the living Gabriel, but the good angel of that name, whom he so strongly resembles, that we saw in our dream descending from heaven to fetch us."

"Is it not very strange, dear sister, that last night we should both dream exactly alike, just as we did in Germany, where we not only had the same dream, but also the three successive nights we should do so?"

"Yes, indeed, in last night's dream the angel Gabriel seemed to bend over us, saying, in a gentle tone, while he tenderly and compassionately regarded us, 'Come, my children; come, my sisters; your mother awaits you. Poor children,' added he, in a voice full of pity and sadness, 'helpless beings — travellers from afar; you will have traversed the earth innocent and gentle as doves, to find rest at last and for ever in the maternal nest.'"

"These were precisely the angel's words as I heard them in my sleep," answered the other orphan, with a pensive air; "we have never done harm to any one, and we have always loved those who loved us, wherefore, then, should we fear to die?"

"And then, sister, it seemed as though, when the good angel so addressed us, we smiled rather than wept, and we were quite, quite happy when, taking each of us by the hand and unfolding his beautiful white wings, he carried us with him into the clear blue sky —"

"Till we reached the bright heavens where our beloved mother, all bathed in tears, was waiting to receive us."

"Ah, sister," cried Blanche, "depend upon it, such visions as this are not sent for nothing." Then, regarding Rose with a touching smile and a look of mournful intelligence, she added, "And besides, were all that to happen, it would put an end to a great source of sorrow and unhappiness, of which we are unfortunately the cause; you know what I mean."

"Alas, alas! yet how can it be our fault when we love him so very dearly? But now we always appear so frightened and sad in his presence, that very likely he thinks we do not love him at all."

As Rose uttered these words, she took her handkerchief from her small work-basket, that she might wipe away the tears that were rolling rapidly down her pale cheeks; as she raised the handkerchief to her eyes, a paper folded like a letter fell from it on the ground. At this sight, the sisters started with alarm, and, clinging to each other, Rose whispered, in a trembling voice:

"Another of those letters! Oh, I fear to take it up; doubtless it resembles the others we have received."

"Oh, but you know we must not allow it to lie there, for fear of its being seen by any one!" said Blanche, stooping, and carefully picking up the paper, "or else the persons who take so much interest in our welfare might run considerable risk and danger."

"But how could that letter have come there?"

"Nay, how has it happened that so many others have been placed in our way; always when our preceptress is absent from us?"

"True, it is quite useless endeavouring to account for a mystery which it is impossible to find out; but let us read the letter, its contents may probably be more comforting and favourable than the last."

The two sisters then read as follows:

"My dear children, continue to love, to idolise your father, for he is very wretched, and 'tis you who cause his unhappiness; yes, unconsciously and involuntarily you occasion sufferings greater than you can form any idea of; you can never imagine the terrible sacrifices your presence imposes on him; but, alas! he is the victim to his paternal duties, and his torments are greater than ever; be careful, therefore, to spare him all demonstration of your affection and tenderness, since they cause him more pain than pleasure. Every caress you bestow on him pierces his heart like a dagger's point, for in you he sees but the innocent cause of his grief. Still, my dear children, you must not despair, and if you have sufficient self-command not to expose him to the painful ordeal of undergoing your tender words and looks, compel yourselves to be reserved, though affectionate, towards him, and you will thereby assuage and relieve a considerable share of his misery.

"Be secret, let not even the good and worthy Dagobert, who so sincerely loves you, know a word of this; for if you breathe a syllable to any living soul of the contents of this letter, not only your dear father, but your faithful Dagobert and the unknown friend who writes it will be exposed to the most frightful dangers; for your enemies are great, powerful, and numerous.

"So let hope and courage sustain your young hearts, and believe that, if you act as advised, you will soon succeed in purifying your father's tenderness for you of

all grief or sorrow, and then what happiness will be yours! Perhaps that joyful day is nearer than you expect.

"Burn this letter as you did those previously received."

So skilfully was this epistle concocted that, if even the orphans had shown it either to their father or Dagobert, its contents would, at most, have passed for a strange and dangerous sort of interference on the part of some ill-judging person, but still there was nothing to merit any particular censure or reprehension. Nothing could have been more fiendishly worded, when it is recollected how continual a struggle was going on in the mind of the maréchal, between his unwillingness to abandon his so newly found daughters and his shame at failing in what he considered a sacred, an imperative duty to the son of his late benefactor. On the other hand, the tender susceptibility of the sisters having been awakened by the detestable counsel they had received, they soon perceived the mixture of pleasure and pain their presence imposed on their parent; for while at their sweet and innocent aspect he felt it impossible to quit them, yet the recollection of his broken promise to the emperor and unfulfilled duty to the son cast a deep gloom over his manly countenance, and made him abruptly retreat from the affectionate attentions of his loving children as though he feared to trust himself longer in their sweet society.

While the unhappy girls could only interpret these variations and fluctuating conduct according to the fatal explanation contained in the anonymous letters they received, they became painfully aware of one fact, that, by some mysterious motive, beyond their ability to penetrate, their presence was frequently not only troublesome, but even highly vexatious, to their father. And from thence arose the fast increasing melancholy of Rose and

Blanche, and also a description of fear, restraint, and reserve, which, spite of themselves, repressed the outward manifestation of their filial tenderness, — an effect the more to be regretted as the maréchal, deceived on his side by inexplicable appearances and perfidious hints, attributed it to coolness and diminished affection for himself, and at this idea a pang, severe as that of death, shot through his heart, while his fine features betrayed the bitter anguish he endured; and often would he rush in agony to the solitude of his own chamber, there to indulge the burning tears that flowed in streaming torrents down his sunburnt cheeks.

And the poor heart-broken orphans would fold their arms around each other, and mournfully repeat:

"'Tis we who cause our father's wretchedness, 'tis our presence renders him thus miserable."

It may well be imagined what ravages a thought so fixed and unceasing would effect in two young hearts as loving, timid, and ingenuous as those of the orphans; or how could it be expected that they should entertain mistrust of letters which, although anonymous, spoke with respect and veneration of those they themselves believed best and wisest of all created beings, and when the mysterious assurances they continually received as to the painful effect produced by their presence seemed so fully borne out by the conduct of the father towards themselves? Having been already the victims of so many plots, and having, also, repeatedly heard it said that they were surrounded by numerous enemies, it may readily be supposed that, in strict accordance with the recommendations of their unknown friend, they had never confided even to Dagobert those letters in which the soldier was so justly appreciated.

The end of this diabolical scheme was but too evident. In thus harassing the maréchal on all sides, and persuading him of the coolness and indifference of his daughters, it was naturally enough expected that the hesitation he

still felt to abandon his children to engage in a dangerous and uncertain enterprise would render his life so disturbed and embittered that he would hail with pleasure the chance of forgetting his domestic unhappiness in the bustle and excitement of a rash, generous, and chivalric undertaking; such, at least, was the end proposed by Rodin, and, certainly, his scheme was deficient neither in reason nor possibility.

After having perused the letter, the sisters remained perfectly silent for a time, as though too deeply affected to trust themselves to speak. After a considerable pause, Rose, who held the paper, suddenly approached the fireplace, and, throwing the letter on the burning embers, exclaimed, in a timid voice:

"We must not delay destroying this paper, else, you know, dear Blanche, terrible things might happen."

"Alas!" said Blanche, "I scarcely see how any greater afflictions or misfortunes can possibly occur than have already befallen us. Only to think of our occasioning such unhappiness to our beloved father. What can it be that we do, or how do we grieve him?"

"Perhaps, dear Blanche," replied Rose, while tears almost choked her utterance, "perhaps our father is disappointed in us; and although he loves us as the children of our poor mother, whom he so worshipped, still he finds not in us the daughters he had hoped for and imagined. Do you understand me, sister?"

"Oh, yes, yes! Doubtless that it is that so pains and vexes him. You see we are so ignorant, so uncivilised, and awkward, that he is ashamed of us; but yet because he loves us in spite of all these disadvantages, that gives him pain."

"But it is not our fault; our dear mother brought us up as well as she could in the wilds of Siberia."

"And I am sure my father in his heart does not blame us for it — but, as you say, I am sure it gives him pain. And then, you know, if he have friends

whose daughters are beautiful, clever, and accomplished, he cannot help regretting that we are not so likewise."

"Do you recollect when he took us to see our cousin, Mlle. Adrienne, who has been so good and kind to us, how he said, with admiring looks, 'Did you observe, my children, how beautiful Mlle. Adrienne is? What sense, what goodness of heart, and nobleness of mind are united in her, with grace and beauty impossible to surpass!' And he spoke truly. Mlle. de Cardoville looked so lovely, and her voice sounded so sweetly on one's ear, that while gazing on her, or listening to her words, one quite forgot one's own griefs."

"Well, then, depend upon it, Rose, that, when our father compares us either with our cousin or various other young ladies he knows, he feels disappointed and ashamed of us; and it is quite natural that a person beloved and honoured as he is everywhere should wish for children of whom they could feel proud."

Suddenly pressing her hand on her sister's arm, Rose said, in an anxious tone:

"Listen! Listen! I can hear loud talking in my father's room!"

"Oh, yes," replied Blanche, also hearkening, "You are right, — some one is walking hastily, — 'tis my father's step, I am sure."

"How loudly he is speaking! He seems dreadfully angry! Perhaps he will come here!"

And at the thoughts of the coming of their parent, the father who loved and idolised them, the unhappy girls looked at each other in terror.

The sound of angry voices becoming momentarily more distinct and threatening, Rose, pale and trembling, said to her sister:

"Do not let us stay here! Pray, pray, come with me to our bedroom!"

"Why, dear Rose?"

"Because we cannot help hearing all our father

says, and he, most likely, is not aware of our being here."

"You are right — quite right!" returned Blanche, rising quickly from her chair; "come, come, sister!"

"I am quite frightened!" continued Rose; "I never before heard my father speak with so much irritation."

"Sister," exclaimed Blanche, turning deadly pale, and suddenly staying her progress to the adjoining chamber, "it is Dagobert he is so angry with!"

"What can have occurred to cause our father to be so very much displeased?"

"I know not; some fresh misfortune, doubtless. Oh, sister, do not let us stay here any longer. I cannot bear to hear our good Dagobert spoken to in that manner."

The loud noise of some article either thrown down or knocked over in the apartment of their parent so terrified the orphans that, pale and trembling with emotion, they rushed into their bedchamber, and secured the door.

Let us now explain the cause of Maréchal Simon's violent excitement and extreme anger.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WOUNDED LION.

This was the scene whose echoes had so much alarmed Rose and Blanche. Alone, Maréchal Simon, in a state of exasperation difficult to describe, began to walk up and down hastily, his handsome, manly countenance inflamed with anger, his eyes sparkling with indignation, whilst on his broad brow, where the hair was growing gray and cut very short, the very throbbing of the veins might be counted, as they seemed swelling ready to burst. From time to time his thick black moustache was agitated by a convulsive movement like that which agitates the face of an enraged lion; and as a lion wounded, torn, tortured, by a thousand invisible small darts, goes backwards and forwards in his den with fierce agony, so the Maréchal Simon, breathless, excited, walked up and down in his room, as it were, by bounds; sometimes walking slightly bent, as if he was bowed down by the weight of his anger; sometimes, on the contrary, stopping, suddenly becoming erect, crossing his arms over his broad chest, his head elevated, his look threatening, terrible, he seemed to hurl defiance at an invisible foe, whilst he muttered confused exclamations; then he was the man of war and battle in all his intrepid fervour. The maréchal then paused, stamped his foot angrily, went to the mantelpiece, and rang so violently that the cord remained in his hand.

A servant quickly answered this hasty ringing.

"Have you not told Dagobert I wished to speak with him?" he inquired.

"I obeyed your order, my lord duke, but M. Dagobert went with his son to the door of the courtyard, and —"

"Very well!" said the Maréchal Simon, waving his hand quickly and imperiously.

The servant left the room, and his master resumed his hasty strides, violently squeezing in his hand a letter which had been innocently brought to him by Killjoy, who when he saw him come in ran to him to be caressed.

At last the door opened, and Dagobert appeared.

"I have been awaiting you for some time, sir!" said the maréchal, in an irritated tone.

Dagobert more pained than surprised at this fresh display of temper, which he rightly attributed to the extreme excitement in which the maréchal was continually, replied, mildly:

"Excuse me, general, but I went out with my son, and —"

"Read that, sir!" said the maréchal, interrupting him abruptly, and handing him the letter.

Then whilst Dagobert was reading, the maréchal added, with fresh rage, and knocking over a chair as he moved:

"So it would appear, then, that even in my own house there are some wretches; no doubt bribed by those who pursue me with such deadly animosity. Well, sir, have you read it?"

"Another piece of infamy to add to the rest," said Dagobert, calmly, and he threw the letter into the fire.

"The letter is infamous, but it tells the truth," replied the maréchal.

Dagobert looked at him without comprehending his meaning.

The maréchal continued, "And do you know who

brought me this infamous epistle? It would seem as though the devil mingled in the dance, — it was your dog."

"Killjoy?" said Dagobert, greatly astonished.

"Yes," replied the maréchal, with bitterness; "no doubt it was a joke of your invention?"

"I am not in much of a mood for joking, general!" answered Dagobert, more and more sorrowful at the state of irritation in which he saw the maréchal. "I cannot account for this at all. Killjoy fetches and carries very well, no doubt he saw the letter in the house, and picked it up, and —"

"And who left this letter here? Am I, then, surrounded by traitors? You do not keep a vigilant lookout — you in whom I have such confidence —"

"Hear me, general!"

But the maréchal went on without listening:

"What! I have fought for twenty-five years, I have headed armies, I have struggled victoriously against the worst times of exile and proscription, I have resisted the blows of clubs, and am I to be killed by the points of pins? What, persecuted even in my own house! Am I to be beset, tortured at every instant by the workings of some unknown hand? When I say unknown, I mistake. D'Aigrigny — that double-dyed traitor, that renegade — is at the bottom of all this, I am sure. I have but one enemy in the world, and it is that man. There must be an end of this, for it wearies me — it is too much!"

"But, general, remember he is a priest, and —"

"What is it to me if he be a priest? I have seen him handle a sword, and I know how to bring up his soldier's blood into the face of this renegade."

"But, general —"

"I tell you that I must find some one!" exclaimed the maréchal, a prey to violent exasperation; "I tell you it is necessary for me to give a name and shape to

these dark infamies, in order that I may put an end to them. They hem me in on every side, they make my life a hell, as you well know, and they spare nothing to save me from those rages which kill me by inches. I can rely on no one!"

"General, I cannot allow you to say so without remark," said Dagobert, in a calm but firm and penetrating voice.

"What mean you?"

"General, I cannot allow you to say that you can rely on no one; you will, perhaps, end by believing so, and that would be still harder for you than for those who know what their devotion is, and would throw themselves into the flames for you; and I — am one of these — I! and you well know it!"

These simple words, spoken by Dagobert with a tone of profound emotion, recalled the maréchal to himself; for his loyal and generous disposition might be from time to time excited by irritation or chagrin, but it soon resumed its original uprightness and justice, and replying to Dagobert, he said, in a tone less harsh, but which was still much agitated:

"You are right, I ought not to doubt you — my irritation masters me! This infamous letter has quite unhinged me — made me mad. I am unjust — brutal — ungrateful! Yes, ungrateful — and to whom? To you — yes —"

"Do not say another word about me, general; with such kind words at the end of the year, you may treat me like a brute for the other three hundred and sixty-four days. But what has occurred?"

The maréchal's countenance again became overcast, and he said in a brief, quick tone:

"What is it has occurred? — that I am despised — disdained!"

"You — you?"

"Yes; me — me! And, after all," added the maré-

chal, bitterly, "why should I conceal this fresh wound from you? I have doubted you, and I owe you this recompense. You shall then know all. For some time past I have remarked that when I met my old companions in arms they gradually withdrew from me."

"What, was it this that the anonymous letter — "

"Alluded to? — yes. And it said the truth," continued the maréchal, with a sigh of anger and indignation.

"But it is impossible, general. You, so loved — so respected!"

"These are but words; I speak to you of facts. When I appear the conversation commenced suddenly ceases; instead of treating me like a brother soldier, they affect towards me a stiff and chill politeness. There are a thousand shades, a thousand nothings, which wound the heart, and yet can hardly be described."

"What you tell me, general, astounds me," replied Dagobert, in amaze; "yet, as you tell me so, I must believe you."

"It had become intolerable. I wished to have it cleared up; and this morning I went to General d'Havrincourt, who was colonel with me in the Imperial Guard, and is the soul of honour and frankness. I went to him to open my heart. 'I have perceived,' I said to him, 'the coldness evinced towards me; there must be some calumny in circulation against me. Tell me all. Knowing the attacks, I will defend myself boldly — honourably.'"

"Well, general?"

"D'Havrincourt was stiff and ceremonious, making cold replies to my questions, such as 'I do not know, monsieur le maréchal, that any calumnious report has been spread about you.' 'I do not require to be called "monsieur le maréchal," my dear D'Havrincourt. We are old soldiers — old friends! My honour is uneasy, I confess; for I find that you and our comrades do not receive me so cordially as you did in former days. It

cannot be denied; I see it — I know it — I feel it.' At this D'Havrincourt replied, with the same coldness, 'I have never remarked any failure in attentions to you.' 'I am not talking of attentions,' I exclaimed, pressing his hand cordially, whilst he very faintly returned my grasp, as I remarked, 'I speak to you of affection, of confidence evinced towards me, whilst now I am treated more and more like a stranger. Why is this? Wherefore this estrangement?' Still chilling and reserved, he answered, 'These are but such delicate shades, monsieur le maréchal, that it is impossible for me to give you an opinion on this point.' My heart was filled with anger and grief. What was to be done? To provoke D'Havrincourt was folly, and from self-respect I broke off a conversation which but too well confirmed my fears. Thus," added the maréchal, more and more excited, "thus I have no doubt fallen from the esteem to which I am entitled — perhaps despised; and yet ignorant of the cause! Is not this hateful? If, indeed, there was any fact, any report, I might at least be able to defend myself — avenge myself — or refute it. But nothing — nothing — not a word; a coldness as polite as it was cutting and insulting. Oh, again I say it is too much — too much! And all this is added to other cares. What a life has mine been since my father's death! Can I even find some rest, some happiness, in my own home? No; I return to it, and it is to peruse infamous letters. And besides this," added the maréchal, in a tone of deep affliction, after a moment's hesitation, — and besides this, I find my children more and more indifferent towards me. Yes," added the maréchal, as he observed Dagobert's amazement; "and yet they do not know how dear they are to me!"

"Your daughters indifferent?" replied Dagobert, surprised. "Do you say that?"

"And, indeed, I do not blame them; they have scarcely had time to know me."

"Not had time to know you!" responded the soldier, in a reproachful tone, and becoming excited in his turn. "And of whom did their mother talk to them but of you? And did not I constantly make you the third amongst us? And what have we taught your children if it were not to know, to love you?"

"You defend them; that is just! They love you better than me," said the maréchal, with increasing bitterness.

Dagobert was deeply moved, and gazed at the maréchal without reply.

"Yes," said the maréchal, with a painful burst, "yes, it is cowardly, ungrateful. But no matter. Twenty times I have been jealous — yes, cruelly jealous — of the affectionate confidence which my children testify to you, whilst when with me they seem always fearful. If their melancholy features are sometimes animated by a gayer look than usual, it is when conversing with you or when they see you; whilst to me they show but constraint, coldness, and it kills me. Sure of the affection of my children, I could have braved everything, overcome everything." Then seeing Dagobert about to rush towards the door which communicated with the apartment of Rose and Blanche, the maréchal said to him, "Where are you going?"

"To fetch your daughters, general."

"What to do?"

"To bring them before you; to say to them, 'My children, your father believes you do not love him.' I will only say that, and you will see —"

"Dagobert, I forbid you!" exclaimed the father of Rose and Blanche, impetuously.

"It is not a question of Dagobert; you have no right to be unjust towards the poor dear children." And again the soldier moved towards the door.

"Dagobert, I command you to remain here!" exclaimed the maréchal.

"Hear me, general. I am your soldier, your inferior, your servant, if you will," said the ex-dragoon, roughly; "but there is no rank, no grade to be considered, when it is a question of defending your daughters. All will be explained; to place good people in one another's presence — that is the only way I know."

And if the maréchal had not retained him by the arm, Dagobert would have gone into the orphans' apartment.

"Stay!" said the maréchal, so imperiously that the soldier, accustomed to obedience, bowed his head and did not move.

"What are you about to do?" inquired the maréchal; "to tell my daughters that they do not love me? Thus to excite an affectation of tenderness which the poor girls do not actually experience? It is not their fault; no doubt it is mine!"

"Ah, general," said Dagobert, with a tone of deep affliction, "it is no longer anger that I feel whilst I hear you speak thus of your children, but grief. You break my heart."

The maréchal, touched by the expression of the soldier's physiognomy, replied less harshly, "Well, then I am wrong again; and yet, I ask you without bitterness, without jealousy, are not my daughters more confiding, more familiar with you than with me?"

"*Morbleu!* my general," cried Dagobert, "if you take that view, why, they are more familiar with Killjoy than with me. You are their father, and however good a father may be, he inspires a certain awe. They are familiar with me, *pardieu!* Why, how could they be otherwise? How the devil should they have any respect for me who, except my moustaches and my six-foot stature, am just like some old granny who nursed them? Then I must tell you, too, even before the death of your good father you were melancholy — preoccupied — and the children remarked it; and what you take for cold-

ness on their part is, I am sure, only uneasiness on your account. Really, general, you are not just; you complain because, in fact, they love you too much."

"I complain of what I suffer," said the maréchal, with painful excitement; "I alone know my own sufferings."

"They must, indeed, be great," continued Dagobert, with increasing emotion. "But why should I seek to defend the unfortunate children, who only know how to be resigned and love you? What is the use of defending them against your unhappy blindness?"

The maréchal made a gesture of impatience and anger, and replied, with assumed coolness, "I shall always remember all I owe you. I never can forget it, whatever you may do."

"But, general," cried Dagobert, "why will you not allow me to fetch your children?"

"Do you not see that such a scene would crush, destroy me?" exclaimed the maréchal, exasperated. "Do you not see that I have no desire to make my daughters witnesses of what I endure? A father's grief has dignity, sir, and you ought to perceive and respect it."

"Respect it? No! For it is an injustice that causes it."

"Enough, sir, enough."

"And not content with thus tormenting yourself," cried Dagobert, unable any longer to contain himself, "do you know what you will do? You will drive your daughters to die of grief, I tell you; and it was not for that that I brought them to you from the depths of Siberia."

"Reproaches?"

"Yes; for to make your daughters unhappy is the real way to evince ingratitude to me."

"Leave the room this instant, sir!" cried the maréchal, greatly excited, and so fearful from his anger and grief, that Dagobert, regretting to have urged him so far, replied:

"General, I was wrong; I have, perhaps, been wanting in respect. Excuse me, but — "

"I excuse you, but desire you will leave me alone," replied the maréchal, containing himself with difficulty.

"One word, general!"

"I request you as a favour to leave me alone; I require it as a service at your hands. Will that suffice?" said the maréchal, redoubling his efforts to contain himself. And a ghastly paleness succeeded the deep red which, during this painful scene, had inflamed the maréchal's features. Dagobert, alarmed at this symptom, renewed his entreaties.

"I entreat you, general," he said, in an agitated voice, "allow me for a moment to — "

"Since you will have it so, I will quit the room, sir," said the maréchal, advancing towards the door.

These words were uttered in such an accent that Dagobert dared persist no longer, but bowed his head in grief and despair, looked again for a moment at the maréchal in silence, and with a supplicating air; but at another impatient gesture which the father of Rose and Blanche could hardly repress, the soldier slowly left the apartment.

But a few minutes had elapsed since Dagobert's departure, when the maréchal, who, after a deep and gloomy silence, had several times approached the door of his daughters' apartment with hesitation filled with anguish, made a violent effort with himself, wiped the perspiration which streamed upon his brow, endeavoured to conceal his agitation, and entered the room to which Rose and Blanche had retreated.

CHAPTER XII.

THE TEST.

DAGOBERT was perfectly right to defend his children, as he paternally styled Rose and Blanche, and yet the coldness and indifference with which the maréchal reproached his daughters were unfortunately but too much borne out by appearances. As he had told his father, being utterly unable to explain the cause of the timid embarrassment, the shrinking dread, his children seemed to experience in his presence, he at last ascribed it to the coldness of their feelings towards himself. At times he bitterly reproached himself with not having been able to conceal from them the severe grief their mother's death had occasioned him, allowing them to infer thereby that they were insufficient to console him; and, again, the fear would come across him of not having manifested an affection sufficiently warm and tender to replace the parent they had lost. At other times he dreaded lest his soldierlike roughness had alarmed and discouraged them. And then he would persuade himself, with a bitter pang, that having always lived away from him, they looked upon their father almost as a stranger. In a word, the most improbable and unfounded suspicions presented themselves to his mind in endless variety, and, so soon as the seeds of doubt, distrust, or fear have insinuated themselves into an affection, the fatal fruits will not be long in manifesting themselves. And yet, spite of the coldness which so deeply pained him, so intense was the maréchal's affection for his daughters,

that the idea of again quitting them caused him the bitterest agony, and occasioned a continual struggle between his feelings as a father and what he looked upon as a sacred and imperative duty.

As for the various slanderous reports, so skilfully circulated respecting the maréchal that many even of his most honourable-minded friends and old military companions gave some credit to them, they were industriously propagated by the allies of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier with most fatal and fiendish success. The aim and import of these vile rumours will be seen hereafter; but their present effect on the sensitive mind of the maréchal, already writhing under so many deep sources of grief, was to drive him almost to a state of madness.

Carried away by passion, and driven almost to desperation by the continual goadings and torture he experienced at the hands of his unseen enemies, and still further irritated by Dagobert's words, he had driven him from his presence. But, after the old man had quitted him, the maréchal, left to solitude and reflection, could not avoid recalling the warmth and self-conviction with which the soldier had vindicated his daughters, and a doubt stole over his mind as to the reality of the frigidity and indifference of which he had accused them. He determined, therefore, to test the matter at once; and, having taken a fearful resolution in the event of his distracting doubts being confirmed, entered, as before stated, into his daughters' apartment.

So loud and angry had been the discussion with Dagobert, that the sound of their voices had reached the ears of the sisters, who had quitted their sitting-room to avoid overhearing the conversation of their father, and sought refuge in their bedchamber — their pale and anxious countenances evincing the terror they experienced. At the sight of the maréchal, whose features also bore the marks of extreme agitation, the sisters rose from their

seat, and, respectfully welcoming their parent, remained clinging to each other in trembling suspense.

And yet neither anger nor severity were indicated by the expression of the maréchal's features. On the contrary, they were marked by a deep and almost supplicating sorrow, a look that seemed to implore their sympathising affection. It was as if he had said:

"My children, I am wretched, and I come to you for comfort. I cannot live without the solace of your love and tenderness."

And so clearly were these words impressed on the speaking countenance of the maréchal, that, after the orphans had conquered their first fear, they were about to throw themselves into his arms; but recalling the conduct recommended in the anonymous letter, in which they were assured that every display of affection on their part added to their father's sufferings, they exchanged a mournful glance with each other and restrained themselves from an act calculated to cause additional pain to their beloved parent.

And by a cruel coincidence the maréchal also pined to clasp his children to his heart, — that noble heart smarting under so many stings their innocent love alone could cure. His eye rested on them with doting fondness, and he was even about to call them to him, not daring to enfold them in his arms for fear of exciting that timidity and embarrassment with which they seemed so oppressed when in his presence; but the hapless girls, terrified by the fiendlike advice they had received, made no responsive movement, but continued to stand silent and trembling before him.

A bitter pang shot through the heart of the maréchal at this apparent insensibility; all doubt was at an end, and it was but too manifest that his daughters could neither comprehend his terrible grief nor his despairing tenderness.

"Still, still cold and immovable," said he, mentally. "Alas, then, I was not mistaken!"

But anxious to conceal the misery he endured, he advanced towards his daughters, and, in a voice he struggled hard to render calm and composed, said:

"Good day, my children."

"The same to you, papa," replied Rose, less timid than her sister.

"I was unable to see you all yesterday," continued the maréchal, in an unsteady voice. "I was so deeply engaged, and with affairs of such deep importance, that I had no means of escaping from them, — matters relative to my military duties; but you are not angry with me for having thus neglected you, I hope?" said the maréchal, trying to smile, not venturing to tell them that, after the violence and excitement of the preceding night, he had sought to tranquillise his jarred and harassed feelings by gazing on them as they slept. "Tell me," repeated he, "will you not forgive me for this seeming neglect on my part?"

"Certainly, dear papa," said Blanche,. timidly, and casting down her eyes as she spoke."

"And if," said the maréchal, speaking slowly and distinctly, "I were obliged to leave you for a time, you would also excuse me, and try to reconcile yourselves to my absence, would you not?"

"We should be very sorry, indeed, if you put yourself to the smallest inconvenience on our account," replied Rose, as she remembered that the anonymous letters continually referred to the sacrifices their presence compelled their father to make.

At this reply, uttered with as much embarrassment as timidity, but which the maréchal construed into genuine and unaffected indifference, the unhappy father ceased to hope for comfort from the affection of his children, who evidently felt nothing for him beyond cold respect and frigid duty.

"It is finished!" thought the miserable parent, as he contemplated his children; "they have no feeling of affection in common with myself. Whether I go or stay, it matters not to them. No, no, they love me not; since, even in this awful moment in which, perhaps, I behold them for the last time, no warning instinct whispers to them that their tenderness would save me."

While these painful reflections passed through the mind of the maréchal, he still kept tenderly gazing on his daughters, and his manly features assumed an expression at once so touching and yet distracting, his eyes revealed so plainly and mournfully the anguish and despair that lay heavy at his heart, that Rose and Blanche, thoroughly overcome, terrified by the mute appeal of their father, forgot all their caution and pre-determination, and, yielding to an irresistible impulse of spontaneous tenderness, threw their arms around their father's neck, and covered him with tears and kisses.

Neither Maréchal Simon nor his daughters had uttered a word, yet all three understood each other. Their hearts, as though touched by an electric shock, had mingled, as it were, into one.

Vain fears, false doubts, deceitful counsels, all had given way before the burst of genuine affection which threw the daughters into their father's arms, and infused faith and confidence into their hearts at the very moment when a fatal mistrust was about to separate them for ever.

All these thoughts passed rapidly through the mind of the maréchal, but he found no words to give them utterance. Breathless with wonder and delight, the overjoyed father smothered the face, hands, and hair of his beloved children with his kisses by turns, weeping over them, smiling, sighing, and betraying an ecstacy of happiness that bordered on delirium. At length he exclaimed:

"I have found them again — but, no, no, I have never

lost them! They have always loved me, I feel assured of it, but durst not tell me so. I have been too grave — too severe for their timid natures. I have repressed the utterance of their tenderness by my gloom and reserve. And to think, too, that I should imagine — but it is all my fault. Merciful God, I thank thee for this blessing, which seems to bring with it increase of strength, courage, resolution, and hope. Ha, ha, ha!" exclaimed he, laughing and weeping at the same time, as he again and again pressed his children to his heart; "let them come now and mock me, despise, and harass me. I defy them all, ay, and the whole world, too, to render me again unhappy. Look at me, my beloved ones, and let the sight of those dear eyes speak peace and happiness to my soul."

"Dear, dear father," cried Rose, with enchanting innocence, "then you do love us as much as we love you?"

"And now you will always allow us to throw our arms about your neck, embrace you, and tell you how delighted we are to be with you?"

"And to display to our dearest father all the tenderness we have been hoarding up in our hearts, when our only grief, alas! consisted in being unable to exhibit it."

"And you will give us your permission to speak all our thoughts aloud?"

"Yes, yes," beloved children," answered Maréchal Simon, almost beside himself with joy, "who or what shall prevent you from pouring out all the treasures of your young hearts to a parent who can never sufficiently testify his love for you? Who has hitherto denied us all that delight? But no, no; do not reply; I know, I understand quite well how all has happened. Enough, however, of the past; I see plainly enough that my absent and preoccupied manner has been too much for your young ideas to comprehend, and, naturally enough, you have explained it after your own belief of its cause,

and it has grieved you and rendered you sad; while, on my side, I have been equally pained at your dejection, which I mistook for — But, upon my word, I seem unconscious of what I am saying, and to have no other thought but of looking at you till my brain grows dizzy with excess of joy."

"Dear, kind papa," cried the delighted girls, "look well into our eyes, that you may read there all the love with which our hearts are filled for you."

"And besides that, dearest papa," added Blanche, sweetly, "you will see written there happiness unfailing for ourselves, and love unchangeable for you. Give me your hand," continued she, taking the hand of her father, and pressing it to her heart.

"And me, too, dear father," cried Rose, taking the maréchal's other hand.

"Now, then," said both sisters, "do you believe in the love and happiness we told you of?"

It is impossible to describe the look of almost heavenly brightness and filial pride with which the sweet girls regarded their parent, as he placed his brave hands, according to their directions, and felt the eager throb of their youthful hearts, beating high with joy and hope.

"Ah, yes!" exclaimed the maréchal; "happiness and tenderness are alone capable of causing pulsations such as these."

A sort of heavy, hoarse sigh proceeding from the chamber door, which had been left open, made the happy girls raise their heads from their father's shoulder, while all three directed their looks to the spot from whence the sound arose; there they perceived the tall figure of Dagobert, by whose side stood Killjoy, rubbing his black nose against the knees of the old soldier.

Wiping his eyes with his blue checked handkerchief, the old man stood stiff and motionless as if on parade. Then struggling between the emotion he tried to subdue and the choking in his throat caused by the tears he

obliged himself to swallow, significantly shaking his head he managed to say to the maréchal in a harsh, guttural, sobbing kind of voice:

"Well, I said so! I told you so — didn't I?"

"Hush!" replied the maréchal, with an expressive smile. "You were a better father than myself, my worthy friend, — but come and embrace my dear girls. I am no longer jealous of their affection!"

So saying, the maréchal held out his hand to the soldier, who warmly and energetically pressed it, while the sisters threw their arms around his neck, and Killjoy, wishing, according to custom, to have his share in the happiness going forward, reared himself on his hind legs, and familiarly placed his fore paws on the shoulders of his master.

For a moment the silence was unbroken by a sound; but the exquisite felicity enjoyed by the maréchal, his daughters, and their faithful Dagobert was suddenly interrupted by a loud barking from Killjoy, who had quitted his two-legged position.

The happy group parted, looked around them, and beheld the stupid countenance of Jocrisse, looking more vacant and silly than usual; the idiotic fellow remained standing staring in the open doorway, carrying his eternal wood-basket in one hand, and a large *plumeau*, or feather brush, in the other.

Nothing is more exhilarating than happiness. Thus, though his appearance just then was anything but opportune or agreeable, the sight of this grotesque figure, with the fixed stolidity of his gaze, drew a peal of gay, joyous laughter from the bright rosy lips of the sisters.

The very circumstance of Jocrisse having brought back to the so long dejected girls those mirthful smiles and vivacious spirits which had once been so natural to them, was quite sufficient to claim for him the indulgence of the maréchal, who accordingly said, in a kind, encouraging manner:

"What do you want, my good fellow?"

"M. le Duc," replied Jocrisse, with an awkward bow, and dropping his *plumeau*, in a forcible attempt to cover his breast with his hand, "I hope you do not think it is me."

The laughter of the light-hearted girls broke out again with redoubled vehemence.

"Who the deuce is it, then, if not you?" inquired the maréchal.

"Come here, Killjoy!" cried Dagobert, for the sagacious brute seemed to entertain a secret presentiment concerning the supposed simpleton, not exactly to his advantage, and was drawing close to him with a more than suspicious air.

"No, M. le Duc," replied Jocrisse, "it is not me — I mean my fault — I took the liberty to come; but because the *valet de chambre* told me to tell M. Dagobert, when I come up with wood, to tell you, M. le Duc — as I was bringing up a basketful — that M. Robert wanted — to — speak — to you."

At this ridiculous piece of oratory on the part of Jocrisse, and the sight of his great staring, rolling eyes and bewildered-looking countenance, the two girls again indulged their mirthful propensities, and fresh bursts of laughter welcomed its delivery. But the maréchal joined not in their hilarity; on the contrary, he started with a painful recollection as the name of M. Robert met his ear.

This individual was the secret emissary of Rodin, as regarded the possible, though somewhat adventurous scheme in agitation for endeavouring to carry off the young prince, Napoleon II.

After a brief pause, the maréchal, whose countenance was still radiant with joy and happiness, said to Jocrisse:

"Beg of M. Robert to wait a moment below, — in my study."

"Yes, M. le Duc!" replied Jocrisse, bowing till his head touched the ground. "I will, M. le Duc!"

As soon as the idiot had quitted the chamber, the maréchal said to his daughters, in a joyful tone:

"This is not a day or a moment to leave you, my sweet children — even for M. Robert."

"Oh, so much the better, dear papa," cried Blanche, gaily, "for, to tell you the truth, that M. Robert is no favourite of mine as it is."

"Have you writing materials at hand!" inquired the maréchal.

"Oh, yes, dear papa," answered Rose, quickly, pointing to a small writing-table placed beside one of the windows, to which the maréchal hastily walked; "you will find everything there, arranged all ready, as though prepared purposely for you."

And then the two sisters, who had considerately forborne to interrupt or follow their father, but remained standing by the fireside, tenderly and lovingly embraced each other, rejoicing, with all the delight of their young and innocent hearts, in this day's unexpected happiness.

The maréchal, meanwhile, seated himself before the writing-table of his daughters, and beckoned to Dagobert to approach him.

While rapidly tracing, with a firm hand, some few words on the paper, he said smilingly to Dagobert, but in so low a tone that his daughters were unable to hear him:

"Do you know what I had almost resolved on before entering here a little while ago?"

"No, general; tell me yourself."

"To blow out my brains; and it is to my children I owe the relinquishing my fatal intention."

The maréchal then resumed his writing.

Dagobert could not refrain from a sudden start, as this fearful confirmation of his worst fears reached him

from the maréchal's own lips. But that passed away, and he replied:

"You could not have done so with your own pistols at any rate, general. I had guarded against that by taking off the caps."

The maréchal turned quickly towards him, and looked at the old soldier with an air of surprise. The latter, however, bore the scrutiny unmoved, but, merely giving a confirmatory nod of the head, said:

"Never mind, that's all done with. Thank God those dreadful thoughts are for ever ended!"

The maréchal's only answer was to point to his children with a look of ineffable tenderness and joyful exultation; then sealing the brief note he had just written, he gave it to the soldier, saying:

"Carry that to M. Robert, and say I will see him to-morrow."

Dagobert took the letter and departed.

Then the maréchal, returning to his daughters, and extending his arms, said, gaily:

"Come, young ladies, I claim one of your best kisses for having sacrificed that poor M. Robert to you. Now, then, I am waiting to be paid!"

Rose and Blanche threw themselves on their father's neck.

At almost the same instant that these things were passing at Paris, two strange travellers, though separated from each other, exchanged through space and distance their mysterious thoughts.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF ST. JOHN THE DECAPITATED.

THE sun is declining.

At the extremity of an immense forest of pines, in the depths of a gloomy solitude, are the ruins of an abbey formerly dedicated to St. John the Decapitated.

Ivy, parasitical plants, and moss cover almost entirely the stones blackened with age; several ruined arches, some walls pierced with Gothic windows, remain standing, and are defined against the dark curtain of the dense woods.

Elevated above this mass of ruins, and on a mutilated pedestal half hidden by creeping plants, a colossal stone statue, dilapidated here and there, remained standing.

The statue is remarkable — awe-inspiring.

It represents a man beheaded. Clothed in an antique toga, it holds a dish in its hands. In this dish is a head; this head is his own.

It is the statue of St. John the Martyr put to death by order of Herodias.

There is a solemn silence. From time to time is heard but the dull rustling of the branches of the enormous pine-trees shaken by the breeze.

Copper-coloured clouds, reddened by the setting sun, sail slowly above the high forest, and are reflected in the current of a small stream of sparkling water, which, crossing the ruins of the abbey, derives its source from the midst of a mass of rocks at a distance.

The water flows, the clouds pass on, the aged trees shake, the wind sighs.

Suddenly across the shadow formed by the high tops of this enclosure, whose innumerable trunks are lost in the vast depths, there appears a human form.

It is a female.

She advances slowly towards the ruins — reaches them; she tramples on what was once holy ground.

She is pale, her look is sad, her long gown floats in the wind, her feet are covered with dust; her step is painful, faltering.

A block of stone is placed on the border of the stream, nearly underneath the statue of St. John the Decapitated.

On this stone this woman sinks exhausted, breathless with fatigue.

Yet for many days, many years, many ages, she walks onwards — onwards — unceasingly.

But, for the first time, she feels an insuperable lassitude.

For the first time her feet are wearied.

For the first time she who crossed with equal careless and certain step the moving lava of the torrid deserts, whilst whole caravans were swallowed up beneath the waves of burning sand, —

She who with firm and heedless foot trampled on the eternal snows of the northern regions, icy solitudes in which no human being could exist, —

She who was spared by the devouring flames of fire and the impetuous waters of the torrent, —

She, in fine, who for so many centuries had nothing in common with humanity, she now, for the first time, experienced mortal agony.

Her feet were bleeding, her limbs bruised with fatigue, — a devouring thirst consumes her.

She feels these infirmities, suffers under them, and yet dares scarcely believe it.

Her joy would be too overpowering.

But her throat, more and more parched, is contracted; it is on fire. She sees the spring, and goes hastily on her knees to quench her thirst at this crystalline current, clear and bright as a mirror.

What then passes?

Scarcely have her parching lips touched the pure and fresh water, than, still on her knees on the bank of this stream, and leaning on her two hands, this woman suddenly ceases to drink, and looks intently in the limpid brook.

Suddenly forgetting the thirst which still devours her, she utters a loud cry, — a cry of deep, vast, religious joy as a token of thanksgiving towards the Lord.

In this deep mirror she sees that she has grown older.

In some days, in some hours, in some minutes — at this very moment, perchance — she has attained the maturity of her age.

She who for more than eighteen centuries was only twenty years of age, and dragged through worlds and generations this imperishable youth, —

She had grown old. She might then hope for death.

Each minute of her existence she approached the tomb.

Transported at this ineffable hope, she rises suddenly, raises her head to heaven, and clasps her hands in an attitude of fervent prayer.

Then her eyes rest on the large stone statue representing St. John the Decapitated.

The head, which the martyr bears in his hands, seems through its granite eyelid, half closed by death, to cast on the Wandering Jewess a look of commiseration and pity.

And it is she — Herodias — who, in the cruel excitement of a heathen festival, demanded the death of this saint!

And it is at the foot of the image of the martyr that,

for the first time for long ages, the immortality which weighed Herodias down seems to be alleviated.

"Ah, impenetrable mystery, ah, divine hope!" she exclaims, "the heavenly wrath is at length appeased! The hand of the Lord leads me to the feet of this holy martyr; it is at his feet that I begin to be a human creature. It is to avenge his death that the Lord had condemned me to an eternal journeying.

"Oh, *mon Dieu!* grant that not only I may be pardoned! He, the artisan, who, like me, the king's daughter, journeys onwards for ages, — may he, like me, hope to attain the limit of his eternal course!

"Where is he, Lord, where is he? The power you gave me to see him through space, — have you withdrawn it? Oh, at this moment restore to me, O Lord, this divine gift; for, in proportion as I feel these human infirmities, which I bless as the end of my eternity of ills, my sight loses the power of penetrating the immensity, my ear the power of hearing the wandering man from one end of the world to the other."

Night had come — dark, stormy.

The wind had risen amidst the gloomy pine forest.

Behind their black summits the silver disc of the moon began to rise slowly through the dark clouds.

Perhaps the invocation of the Wandering Jewess was heard.

Suddenly her eyes closed, her hands clasped together, and she remained kneeling in the midst of ruins, motionless as a statue amongst tombs.

And then she had a strange vision!

CHAPTER XIV

THE CALVARY.

THIS is the vision of Herodias.

On the summit of a high mountain, bare, rugged, and precipitous, is a Calvary.

The sun is declining as it was declining when the Jewess had dragged herself, exhausted with fatigue, to the ruins of St. John the Decapitated.

The Lord crucified on the cross; the hill and plain, arid, boundless; the figure of Christ on the cross seems white and pale against the blue-black clouds which obscure the face of heaven, and become of a deep violet hue as they lower in the horizon.

In the horizon — where the setting sun has left long trains of lurid light — red as blood.

As far as the eye can reach, no vegetation appears on this gloomy desert, covered with sand and flint, like the time-exhausted bed of some dried-up ocean.

The silence of death reigns over this desolate country.

Sometimes gigantic black vultures, with their bare and fleshy necks, their yellow and bright eyes, pausing in their flight in the midst of these solitudes, come hither to feed on the bleeding prey which they have carried off from a country less savage.

How comes it that this Calvary, this place of prayers, has been constructed so far from the abode of men?

This Calvary was raised at great cost by a repentant sinner. He had done great injury to his fellow men, and, to deserve pardon for his crimes, he climbed up this

mountain on his knees, and became an anchorite; he lived until his death at the foot of this cross, scarcely sheltered by a thatched roof open to the wind on all sides.

The sun is still sinking; the sky becomes more and more sombre; the luminous rays of the horizon, formerly purple, gradually become obscured, like bars of iron, — of iron heated in the fire, the heat of which gradually expires.

Suddenly, there is heard behind one of the extremities of the Calvary opposite to the west the noise of several stones which are detached, and fall rolling to the base of the mountain.

The step of a traveller, who, after having traversed the plain, has been for a weary hour climbing this steep ascent, has caused the stones to roll away.

This traveller does not yet appear, but his slow, equal, and firm tread is heard; at length he attains the summit of the mountain, and his tall form is visible against the stormy sky.

This traveller is as pale as the Christ on the cross; on his broad forehead, from one temple to the other, a black line extends itself.

It is the artisan of Jerusalem!

The artisan rendered unfeeling by misery, injustice, and oppression; he who, without pity for the sufferings of the Divine Man bearing his cross, had repulsed him from his dwelling, exclaiming fiercely:

"Onwards — onwards — onwards!"

And since that day an avenging God has said in his turn to the artisan of Jerusalem:

"Onwards — onwards — onwards!"

And he has gone onwards — eternally onwards!

Not confining his vengeance to this, the Lord has been pleased sometimes to affix death to the steps of the wandering man, and countless graves have been the mile-stones of his homicidal progress across worlds.

And to the wandering man they were days of rest to his infinite pain when the invisible hand of the Lord thrust him into deep solitudes, such as the desert in which he now dragged his footsteps, for as he crossed this desolate plain he did not again hear the funereal knell of the dead, which for ever — for ever sounded behind him in populated lands.

All day, and every day, and at this instant plunged in the dark abyss of his thoughts, following his fatal route, going whithersoever the invisible hand urged him, his head stooping on his breast, his eyes fastened on the ground, the wandering man had traversed the plain, ascended the mountain without looking towards heaven, without looking at the Calvary — without seeing Christ on the cross.

The wandering man was thinking of the last descendants of his race; he felt, in the desolation of his heart, that great perils still menaced them.

And in bitter despair, profound as the ocean, the artisan of Jerusalem sat down at the foot of the Calvary. At this moment, a last ray of the sun, piercing in the horizon the gloomy pile of clouds, threw on the crest of the mountains, on the Calvary, a burning light, like the reflection of a conflagration.

The Jew placed his hand upon his reclining brow; his long hair, agitated by the evening breeze, covered his pale face, when, throwing aside his hair from his face, he started with surprise, — he who was no longer astonished at anything.

With an anxious look he gazed on the long tress of hair which he held in his hand. His locks, lately as black as midnight, had become gray.

He, too, like Herodias, had become older. The progress of his years, arrested for eighteen centuries, had again moved forwards. He, too, as well as the Wandering Jewess, might now hope for the grave.

Throwing himself on his knees, he extended his hands,

his face to heaven, to ask of God an explanation of the mystery which filled him with such joyful hope.

Then, for the first time, his eyes rested on the Christ on the cross, which was on the Calvary, just as the Wandering Jewess had fixed her gaze on the granite eyelid of the holy martyr.

The Christ, with the head bowed beneath the weight of his crown of thorns, seemed from the height of his cross to contemplate with mercy and forgiveness the artisan whom he had cursed so many ages ago, and who, on his knees, leaning back in an attitude of fear and prayer, extended towards him his suppliant hands.

"O Christ," exclaimed the Jew, "the avenging arm of the Lord leads me to this foot of the cross so burdensome, which thou, broken down with sufferings, bearedst! O Christ, when thou wouldest stop to repose at the threshold of my poor abode, and in my pitiless brutality I repulsed thee, saying, Onwards! Onwards! and now, after my wandering life I find myself before this cross; and now, at length, my hair becomes gray. O Christ, in thy divine goodness hast thou pardoned me? Have I, then, attained the end of my eternal course? Doth thy celestial clemency at length grant me that rest of the grave which hitherto, alas! has continually fled from me? Oh, if thy clemency descends on me, may it also descend on the woman, whose punishment is equal to my own! Protect, also, the last descendants of my race! What will be their destiny? Lord, already, one of them, the only one of all whom misfortune has corrupted, has disappeared from this earth. Is it for this that my hair has grown gray? Will my crime never be expiated until not one of the descendants of our doomed family survives? Or does this proof of thy all-powerful goodness, O Lord, which restores me to humanity, announce thy clemency, and the happiness of my descendants? Will they at length come out triumphantly from the perils which threaten them? Will

they be enabled to accomplish all the good with which their ancestor desired to benefit humanity — to merit their pardon and my own? Or, indeed, inexorably condemned by thee, O Lord, as the accursed scions of my accursed race, must they expiate their original offence and my crime?

"Oh, say, — say, O Lord, shall I be pardoned with them, or shall they be punished with me?"

In vain had the twilight given place to the dark and stormy night; the Jew still prayed, fervently kneeling at the foot of the Calvary.

CHAPTER XV.

RÉSUMÉ.

ROMANCE is usually inspired by the observation of manners which it reproduces, in the infinite variety of their most prominent aspects, their most delicate shades. It is also inspired by the study of mankind, and has unveiled to us very frequently the most hidden springs of its multiplied and impassioned nature. But M. Eugène Sue has opened for it fresh horizons. Since the appearance of the "Mysteries of Paris," romance is replete with the spectacle of the general phenomena of social life; romance seeks to study its laws and notes down its disorders and fearful iniquities.

We do not know in France any who have preceded M. Eugène Sue in the wide and progressive path in which he advances. Before him, no doubt, writers of every degree, struck with the varieties, the follies, and the vices of the society of their age, allowed themselves to laugh at them in their works which we will call romances, if you please, for want of a more exact name; thus did Rabelais in "Gargantua," Montesquieu in the "Lettres Persannes," and many others besides, whom we could quote. But whatever was the genius of the majority of these writers, this was the comedy of manners generalised, and not social criticism properly so called. It is true that M. Sue has been reproached with having taken up utopianisms as his starting-points, and urged their application as urgent reforms incumbent on society. The best reply to such a reproach is to appeal to history.

RÉSUMÉ.

Thomas Morus, Harrington, Campanella, have written, under the form of philosophy, social romances, which are called "Utopia," "Oceana," "The City of the Sun," and many of the schemes of their books are found, without any one being surprised, rightly and fitly realised in our day.

The "Mysteries of Paris" and the "Wandering Jew" are animated by a spirit of social philosophy which, to be properly understood, requires a more serious attention than that which is usually accorded to literary fancies.

Awaiting the time when the second of these two works shall be complete, we purpose now to sum up the plot and the principal incidents of this great fable of the "Wandering Jew," that there may be fewer gaps in the reader's memory in perusing the concluding chapters of this admirable study.

It must not be supposed that M. Eugène Sue has had in view in this work a simple campaign against the Jesuits. If he has pursued with the energy of unwearied criticism a corporation of which the past ought to put us all completely on our guard as to the future; if he has thrown the strong light of publicity into the most mysterious secrecies of the Jesuitical Dædalus, be assured that it was not for the simple and sole sake of aiding in the suppression of the Society of Jesus. The Jesuits have been for him a means and not an end; he has seized on them because they were at hand, as instances of the prodigies which a concentration of individual forces can effect in one determined and unvarying line of action.

The real problem he has desired to state, a very ancient problem, but one that has not grown old, is that of a human fraternity becoming more informed by the lights of science. Then, to prove to us that he did not aspire to a chimera, to an ideal of impossible and fanciful organisation, he has brought out to the light of day the marvellous workings of the Jesuitical mechanism, in

order that we might anticipate all that the spirit of good could extract from the intelligent combination of human strength, since the Company of Jesus, in which one poet personifies the Spirit of Evil, has been able to acquire such enormous power by the single fact of its energy and, let us add, its powerful tendency to unity.

"The Wandering Jew," with its multiplicity of episodes, incidents, interests, and facts, is a little world that reflects the great one. As to the personages who people it, they are types, and types painted by a master hand. Each of them corresponds to some one of the aspects of human nature, to one of the characteristic traits of the physiognomy of man.

Let us recall to mind the elements of this drama. They are simple, as suits a work of such extent. It is a sustained struggle. On the one side, the Society of Jesus, that society powerful even from its endurance and the pertinacity of its system, from the self-denial of its associates in the accomplishment of their common work, and from the contempt which it is enabled to create, when requisite, of all principles which may cross its progress. On the other hand is a family, many of the members of which remain strangers to each other, who defend themselves almost always singly, and who, far from concentrating all their strength and all their thoughts in the object of their pursuit, are distracted, weakened, separated by the passions incidental to those who live in the world. They have for an auxiliary, it is true, a kind of providential chance; a fantastic, superhuman being appears in the principal portion of the drama and interferes in their favour. But the Wandering Jew, their ancestor, in spite of his singular nature, can lend them but very feeble succour. He only passes, borne in a whirlwind, in a track marked out by the hand of Heaven. He is frequently far from the oppressed family at the moment when it has the greatest need of his aid.

RÉSUMÉ.

The aim of this unequal struggle, in which one of the parties only defends itself, is the acquisition of an immense inheritance left to all his race by the Marquis de Rennepont in 1682. A victim of the times, from the manœuvres by which the Society of Jesus has seized on all his wealth, M. de Rennepont but too well understood the invincible power of this association. He desired to unite his descendants in order to give them strength, hoping that their association in the love of good and the love of their neighbour would be a striking example for the world and a defence for the oppressed. He took care to endow them for this end with a really kingly fortune. Fifty thousand crowns, escaped from the spoliation of the rest of his property, were by him deposited in the hands of the Israelites, who transmitted this deposit from generation to generation until the term of one hundred and fifty revolving years, that is to say, until the thirteenth of February, 1832, the day appointed for the opening of the marquis's will and the distribution of the inheritance.

The depositaries had placed the fifty thousand crowns out at interest at five per cent., according to the wishes of the testator. At the expiration of the one hundred and fifty years the bequest of the Marquis de Rennepont has accumulated to 225,950,000 francs, of which 13,775,000 francs is to be deducted for expenses, leaving 212,175,000 francs (8,487,000*l.* sterling) to divide amongst the heirs.

This is a great prize to be contended for. Let us add, that the acquiring inheritances is a plague-spot in society which it is very much to the purpose and very useful to point out in the midst of those associations which France possesses. This plague is not a fresh one. The hunting after legacies was one of the principal occupations of the degenerate Greeks and Romans. How many epigrams the satirists of other days have flung out against legacy hunters! In this respect antiquity has nothing to

envy modern times, and modern times are very far from having allowed these traditions of antiquity to perish.

None will have a right to share in the inheritance of the Marquis de Rennepont who is not present in person at the opening of the will on the thirteenth of February, 1832. To recall this obligation to posterity, the testator had distributed to each of the members of his family a medal, which was to serve at once for claim and memento.

A few months before the appointed epoch the Rennepont family comprised seven representatives, holding different positions in the scale of society. These were:

The Prince Djalma, a young Indian full of generous feelings and enthusiasm. He is a type borrowed from the old Asiatic world, and placed with the abrupt right-mindedness of his instincts, but also with full possession of his faculties, in contact with our delicacies, our susceptibility, and conventional ideas, born in a state of civilisation which seems to have effaced every original trace.

Mlle. Adrienne de Cardoville, a noble and independent soul, open to all fine sentiments, reflecting all great and good things, sensitive but firm, ardent but chaste, a singular compound, but yet most admirable, a pagan spirit with a Christian education.

M. Hardy, of refined taste, with excessive sensitiveness. His mother called him the "Sensitive Plant," says the author of "The Wandering Jew," "as he had one of those organisations of a fineness and delicacy as exquisite as expansive, as loving as noble and generous, but of such tender sensibility that the least ruffle made them shrink and retreat into themselves."

The Abbé Gabriel is a character resplendent with goodness and virtue. He is the personification of that portion of the clergy which is, perhaps, not the highest in place, but which practises the greatest virtues in a modest rank. Nothing can be more holy and more respectable than the character of this young man, who

has already undergone martyrdom. Whilst painting with warmth so many virtues, has not M. Eugène Sue proved that he does not confound the true priest with the bad ministers? and that, in attacking dangerous, immoral, impious doctrines, he has not for a moment misrepresented the merit and holiness of Christian morality?

Then come the two daughters of Marshal Simon; the two fair and blushing flowers reared beneath a foreign sky. Their innocence excites respect, their candour creates compassion.

The last scion of the Marquis de Rennepont is a workman, whose name betrays his disorderly habits. Couche-tout-Nud floats between the path of labour and dissipation. He inclines to good, but allows himself to be attracted towards evil. His heart is good, but his head is bad. The weakness of his disposition and the fickleness of his imagination render him the easy victim of every calculating, cool villain who may desire to have an influence over his mind.

In face of this family we have placed the Jesuit Rodin, in whom is personified all the skill and all the vices by which the dangerous company of the sons of Loyola are distinguished in history. Diabolical ambition, learned hypocrisy, obstinate constancy, due, perhaps, to the feeling of strength and vitality of the Order, indifference as to the means — always sanctified by the end, — in fine, the infinite resources and marvellous clearness of a mind continually devoted to the pursuit of one design. Such are the principal features of Rodin's character.

The Company had prepared long since the plot which was to acquire for them the inheritance of M. de Rennepont. Its first care was to obtain an heir who would cede his rights to the Company. Thus Gabriel was ensnared in the nets of the Society of Jesus. He pronounced his vows, by virtue of which all the property

that might fall to him would become the acquisition of the community of which he forms a portion. All the efforts of the Jesuits then tended to separate and keep away the other heirs, in order that Gabriel might accomplish singly the clause of the will, which requires the presence of the descendant of the Marquis de Rennepont on the thirteenth of February, 1832, in the house of the Rue St. François.

Père d'Aigrigny, an ancient *émigré*, formerly a colonel, and now a Jesuit, was at first charged with the conduct of this affair. This man is far from having the superiority of Rodin. The material modes, the forcible acts, the vulgar use of strength, are the levers he employs against the Renneponts.

Djalma is still in India. The young daughters of Marshal Simon have quitted Siberia under the care of an old soldier of the old Imperial Guard, named Baudoin, to whom an adventure, as brave as burlesque, has given the name of Dagobert; but they have not yet crossed the frontier of Germany. It is necessary to prevent the prince from setting out, and the young orphans from arriving. All three are to be taken to prison by skilful measures, which will make the prince appear as a member of the redoubtable association of Indian Stranglers, and which, by depriving Dagobert and his pupils of their papers, and exciting the old soldier to commit an act of legitimate anger, will deliver them into the hands of the burgomaster as turbulent and vagabond. And the author describes, in passing, the prodigies of Indian nature, the mysteries of its ancient civilisation; he conducts us to the dens of wild beasts, and sketches their tamer a hundred times more hideous than the brutes he tames.

In France personal violences present more difficulties and dangers. But the laws intended to protect society become in the hands of the Jesuits the most fearful weapon which can be made use of.

Mlle. de Cardoville possesses in a very high degree

the taste which all right minds have for moral and physical beauty. She has about her servants elegantly clad, she unites in her apartments all the marvels of luxury, which are purposely made to pass as insanity. Then, too strong in her virtue, and yielding to an extreme feeling of independence, she often leaps over the reserves which our customs impose on a young lady. She disdains the patronage of her aunt, the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, an ambitious, jealous woman affiliated with the Society of Jesus. Is it not easy to pass her off as lunatic? The physician, Baleinier, another Jesuit, has acquired Adrienne's confidence, and undertakes to effect this.

One of the most touching and real episodes in the romance is that in which Mlle. de Cardoville, confined by stratagem in a wretched lunatic asylum, handed over to the repulsive attentions of sordid and coarse women, alarmed by the horrid cries which madness utters in this horrible house, feels her reason troubled gradually, and begins to believe that she is really mad, and that Doctor Baleinier has told the truth.

Besides other means frequently employed by the legacy hunters is that of shutting up legitimate heirs under a pretext of madness. The difference between sanity and insanity is not always easy to decide upon. There are very few persons who have not furnished their family, once in their lives, with a pretext for shutting them up in bedlam.

The Company of Jesus has now no other rivals than M. Hardy and Couche-tout-Nud, the workman. This latter is not very redoubtable. They lend him money, which he spends in feasts and orgies; the day of payment arrives, and he is cast in prison for debt. As to the skilful and enlightened manufacturer, he is not caught in such coarse snares. His heart is assailed. A very dear friend, the secret instrument of the Jesuits, summons him to his aid some days before the thirteenth

of February. M. Hardy goes, forgetting all for the service of a man who betrays him.

The Company, then, has reached its aim, *per fas et nefas*, by working out good feelings and bad passions. Vice and virtue are but the instruments of ambitious hypocrisy. It is true that Prince Djalma has contrived to escape from prison; and the daughters of Marshal Simon, with their conductor, have been miraculously freed. All have reached Paris in time; but a powerful narcotic administered to the prince, on the eve of the thirteenth of February, has plunged him in a leaden slumber, lasting during all the day appointed for reading the will. And the marshal's daughters, minors carried off by aid of a pious fraud, have been shut up in a convent, in which they were occupied with the care of their salvation, until the too tardy law should come and set them free, after the thirteenth of February shall have passed away.

The day arrives, — the day of which the Company had never lost sight for a single moment, during a century and a half. The walled-up house of the Rue St. François is at length opened. The will has been read; twelve strikes, and Gabriel is the only heir who is present. Already the Abbé Rodin has seized on the treasure of the Renneponts, when a female appears on the threshold; it is Herodias, the sister of the Jew,[1] like him condemned to wander over the face of the whole earth, a symbol, like himself, of that portion of the human race which God appears to have disinherited, — of those poor creatures who, in all parts of the world, drag on a miserable existence, sinking beneath the burden of their own miseries and the wretchedness of their isolation and their impotency.

[1] Here is some error; Herodias (chap. xiv. of St. Matthew's Gospel) was the wife of Philip, Herod the tetrarch's brother, and neither she, nor her daughter, who brought the head of John the Baptist to her mother in a charger, could have been sister to the (Wandering) Jew, who was a poor, distressed shoemaker. — *English Translator.*

RÉSUMÉ.

Herodias discovers a codicil, which postpones for three months the distribution of the inheritance, and again puts everything in question.

Henceforth the part of the Company of Jesus will be more thorny, for the heirs of the Rennepont family are aware of their plots. The Abbé d'Aigrigny is not competent to this, and Rodin will undertake it. As the Abbé d'Aigrigny has done, as Rodin declares, so many gross things, great things, coarse things, so many little, puerile, secret things will he, Rodin, do. This will be the triumph of mind for the Society of Jesus. Rodin will work upon the passions, — if need be he will excite them, — he will become, if possible, the intimate friend of those whom he seeks to destroy. · He will not lay a coarse plot for them; the mischief shall come from a third or fourth hand.

To begin, Rodin pretends to attack the Jesuits. He first betrays the interests of his Company, the better to serve them afterwards. He restores Mlle. de Cardoville to liberty; brings back the daughters of Maréchal Simon to their father; gains the friendship and confidence of Prince Djalma. Besides, he well sums up his own conduct.

"I have had," he says, "ability sufficient to play the most foolish game for six weeks. Such as you see me, I have played the amiable with a grisette; have talked of progress, humanity, emancipation of women, with a young girl of excited imagination. I have talked of the great Napoleon Buonapartean idolatry with a silly old soldier; I have discoursed of imperial glory, humiliation of France, hope in the King of Rome, with a brave man, a marshal of France, who, if he has his heart full of admiration for that robber of thrones, who was tied by the leg at St. Helena, has his head as hollow and sonorous as a war trumpet. I have done mighty well, i' faith, for I have listened to the feelings of love from a young wild tiger."

With all these puerilities, Rodin obtains immense advantages. In fact, if he creates in the hearts of the prince and Mlle. de Cardoville reciprocal love, it is in the hope that this double passion will produce terrific storms. Already has he sown jealousy between the two lovers. It is true that a woman who defends her happiness is very strong. Mlle. de Cardoville says Rodin has, therefore, not succeeded in separating for very long the two lovers who sought each other.

But, in compensation for this check, how much misery and ruin has not this Jesuit created with his small means — his puerile and secret manœuvres!

Couche-tout-Nud has died in the midst of an orgy, in a delirium of drunkenness; the Society of Jesus had opened to him a road of foolish joys, unrestrained pleasures, debauches of wine and brandy, to lead him to the grave. At the moment when he sinks, struck by the cholera, even in the very room which had witnessed his last bacchic exploits, the pitiless avidity of the Jesuits deals him the last blow by revealing to him the dishonour into which they had contrived to precipitate the woman he loved.

M. Hardy had a friendship, — that friendship is deceived; he had a love, — that love is broken; there remained to him as a last resource activity in his affairs, — his factory is burnt down. He sinks overwhelmed, without strength, into the hands of Rodin, who hands him over to D'Aigrigny. The cares and counsels of the reverend father are not slow in making a gangrene of the wound in his heart, and rendering it incurable. Henceforth retreat, obscurity, in which they weep in silence, and uncontrolled, becomes the sole object of M. Hardy's desires. He will abandon all his interests, all his hopes, to the good fathers, who so generously console him, and he will henceforth ask only for rest until he dies.

Then those strange calumnies spread against the

Maréchal Simon prepare him for the chilling, cutting reception in society, where his glorious deeds ought to produce sympathy, if not admiration and respect. Anonymous letters create, from time to time, coldness and fear between himself and his two daughters. The Company endeavours at the same time to urge the maréchal into a Buonapartean conspiracy, which would, doubtless, be as soon revealed as plotted, and which would thus give the maréchal a prison or exile.

Thus far has Rodin advanced without apparent exertion or direct means, but merely profiting by events, or in contriving to produce them. However, destiny has served him wonderfully.

The cholera, that great purveyor of inheritances, has come to his aid. Amongst all the scenes so powerfully striking which this scourge has inspired M. Eugène Sue withal, we will only refer to that in which the Abbé d'Aigrigny, pursued as a poisoner by the excited mob to the church of Notre-Dame, is saved by the intervention of Gabriel. We cannot dwell too strongly on the noble and sublime actions performed by this priest, for M. Eugène Sue gives by these, as we have already said, the decided lie to those who accuse him of wilfully misrepresenting the noble inspiration which a Christian may have in giving effect to his belief.

We will not conclude this faint and ineffective analysis of a work full of warmth and life, without adding a few words as to the accessory figures whom M. Eugène Sue has grouped around the principal personages in his veritable romance. These are, amongst others,—

La Mayeux, a poor humpbacked girl of the lowest class, often out of work, and consequently without firing, without bread, almost without garments, who undergoes every kind of disgrace with which nature and fate overwhelm her with a nobleness and delicacy with which a deep and vast sense of duty inspires her.

Agricola Baudoin, the admirable type of a workman,

— generous and good; noble even as the proudest of patricians; devoted, brave, and intelligent. This type is not purely imaginary; it is the portrait of which the originals are very fortunately numerous.

Françoise Baudoin, his mother, whose face must always be met in a work full of intrigue carried on under the mask of religion, — Françoise Baudoin is unreservedly under the domination of the Jesuit, her confessor. They have profited by her ignorance and credulity to lead her on to actions the most reprehensible, and yet making her view all as most praiseworthy. It is she who sends Maréchal Simon's daughters to the convent; not as the Company of Jesus designs, to keep them incarcerated until the day of the reading of the will, but to instruct them in the Catholic religion.

Then we have the Queen-Bacchanal and Rose-Pompon. The former is La Mayeux's sister, but as handsome as her younger sister is plain, as light as La Mayeux is serious. She becomes the queen of public balls and the carnival. Then impelled by misery, and Rodin aiding, she falls a step still lower. She expiates her faults by a suicide. As to Rose-Pompon, she is as smiling as fair Céphyse, as handsome, and not less light. What will be the end of her grisette's life — a life cast at random, and passed in all the *chaumières* and hermitages of the Quartier Latin? This the author has not yet told us.

Finally, we have reached these results. One is dead, Couche-tout-Nud. The Society of Jesus is substituted also for two others, Gabriel and Hardy.

There are only left the two daughters of Maréchal Simon, Mlle. de Cardoville, and Djalma. They are still struggling; but the maréchal is already almost *hors-de-combat.*

Djalma and Mlle. de Cardoville are in full power and strength. They love and are reunited. May they escape safe and fortunately from the hands of these potent adversaries!

PART XII.

CHAPTER XVI.

THE COUNCIL.

THE following scene passes at the Hôtel de Saint-Dizier, the day after that on which the reconciliation of Maréchal Simon and his daughters took place.

The princess was listening to Rodin with the most profound attention. The reverend *père* was, according to his usual habit, standing up and leaning against the mantelpiece, with his hands in the hind pocket of his old brown coat; his large shoes, covered with mud, had left their print on the Turkey carpet which was in front of the fireplace. A deep satisfaction was visible in the cadaverous countenance of the Jesuit.

Madame de Saint-Dizier, dressed with a sort of discreet coquettishness, which beseems a mother of the church, never took her eyes off Rodin, who had completely supplanted Père d'Aigrigny in the mind of the devotee. The phlegm, audacity, keen intelligence, and the rude and despotic disposition of the ex-*socius*, imposed on this haughty dame, subjugating and inspiring her with an admiration that was sincere, almost with a liking; and even the cynic personal neglect, the repartee of this almost brutal priest, pleased her, and was a kind of coarse relish, which she preferred to the exquisite manners and perfumed elegance of the handsome Père d'Aigrigny.

"Yes, madame," said Rodin, in a tone impressed with conviction, yet guarded, for these worthies do not unmask themselves even amongst their accomplices, "yes,

madame, the news from our house of retreat at St. Herem is excellent. M. Hardy, the strong-minded, the free-thinker, is at last in the fold of our Holy Catholic, Apostolic, and Romish Church."

Rodin, having uttered these last words hypocritically and nasally, the devotee bowed her head reverentially.

"Grace has reached this impious man," continued Rodin, "and touched him so deeply that in his ascetic enthusiasm he is anxious at once to pronounce the vows which will bind him to our holy Company."

"So soon, father?" said the princess, astonished.

"Our institutes are opposed to this precipitation, unless, indeed, in the case of a penitent *in articulo mortis* (at the point of death), who considers it as vitally beneficial for his salvation to die in our habit, and leave us his property, for the greater glory of the Lord."

"And is M. Hardy in so desperate a condition, *mon père?*"

"He is devoured by fever. After so many severe shocks, which have so miraculously impelled him into the way of salvation," continued Rodin, with emphasis, "this man of so frail and delicate a temperament is at this time almost entirely overcome morally and physically. Thus, austerities, macerations, the divine joys of ecstasy, will prepare his way very speedily in the path of eternal life; and it is probable that before many days —"

And the priest shook his head with a sinister air.

"So soon as that, father?"

"It is almost certain; and I have, therefore, making use of my dispensations, been able to receive the dear penitent, *in articulo mortis*, as a member of our holy Company, to which, according to the rules, he has bequeathed his property present and to come. So that from this hour he has nothing to think of but the salvation of his soul, — another victim to philosophy snatched from the claws of Satan."

"Ah, my father!" exclaimed the devotee, with admiration, "it is a miraculous conversion. The Père d'Aigrigny told me how much you had struggled against the influence of the Abbé Gabriel."

"The Abbé Gabriel," said Rodin, "has been punished for interfering in matters that did not concern him, and for other things also. I required his interdiction, and he has been interdicted by his bishop, and recalled from his curacy. It is said that, by way of passing his time, he goes to the temporary hospitals for the cholera patients, to give Christian consolation; there is no objection to that. But the heresy of this perambulating consoler is smelt a league off."

"He is a dangerous spirit," remarked the princess, "for he has no slight influence over his fellows; and it has required all your admirable, irresistible eloquence, to overcome and crush the detestable counsels of this Abbé Gabriel, who took it into his head to persuade M. Hardy to return to a wordly life. Really, father, you are a St. Chrysostom."

"Good, good, madame," replied Rodin, very insensible to flattery; "reserve this for others."

"I say you are a Saint Chrysostom, *mon père*," repeated the princess, energetically, "for like him, you deserve the name of St. John with the golden mouth."

"Come, come, madame," said Rodin, coarsely, and shrugging his shoulders, "I, a golden mouth? Pooh! my lips are too livid, and my teeth too black. You jest with your golden mouth!"

"But, father —"

"But, madame, I am not caught with such bird-lime," replied Rodin, harshly. "I hate compliments, and never pay them."

"Your modesty must excuse me, father," said the devotee, humbly. "I could not resist the happiness of testifying to you my admiration; for as you had predicted, or foreseen a few months back, there are already

two of the members of the Rennepont family disinterested as to the question of the inheritance."

Rodin looked at Madame de Saint-Dizier with a softer and approving air, when he heard her thus phrase the position of the two defunct heirs. For according to Rodin, M. Hardy, by his donation and his self-destroying asceticism, no longer belonged to this world.

The devotee proceeded:

"One of these men, a miserable artisan, has hastened his own end by his excess of vice. You have led the other into the way of salvation, by arousing his loving and tender qualities. Then, let your foresight have due praise, *mon père*, for you said, 'It is to the passions I will address myself, in order to arrive at my end.'"

"Do not glorify me in such a hurry, I beg," interposed Rodin, impatiently. "What about your niece, and the Indian, and the two daughters of Maréchal Simon? Have these individuals made a Christian end, or are they disinterested in the question of the inheritance, that we should boast thus soon?"

"Certainly not!"

"Well, then, you see, madame, let us not waste time in congratulating ourselves on the past, let us think of the future. The great day approaches — the first of June is not so far off. Heaven grant that we do not see four of the surviving members of the family continuing to live in impenitence until this time, and possessing this vast inheritance, — the means of fresh wickedness in their hands, and a means of glory to the Lord, and to his church, out of the hands of our Company."

"True, father."

"Apropos of that, you should see your agents on the subject of your niece."

"I have seen them, father; and however uncertain may be the chance of which I have spoken to you, it is still worth the experiment. I shall know to-day, I hope, if it be legally possible."

"Perhaps, then, in the strait in which this fresh position may place her, we may find means to arrive at her conversion," said Rodin, with a strange and hideous smile; "for until now, since she so fatally became reconciled with the Indian, the happiness of these two heathens appears as unchanging and bright as a diamond, — nothing can touch it — not even Faringhea's tooth. But, let us hope that the Lord will do justice to such vain and guilty happiness."

This conversation was interrupted by Père d'Aigrigny, who entered the salon with a triumphant air, and exclaimed at the door:

"Victory!"

"What mean you?" inquired the princess.

"He has gone, went this very night," said Père d'Aigrigny.

"Who?" asked Rodin.

"Maréchal Simon," replied Père d'Aigrigny.

"At last," said Rodin, unable to conceal his extreme joy.

"No doubt it was his conversation with General d'Havrincourt which decided him," cried the devotee; "for I knew he had an interview with the general, who, like so many others, believed in the reports, more or less founded, which I set afloat. Every means is good that may reach the impious," added the princess, by way of slightly correcting herself.

"Have you any details?" inquired Rodin.

"I have just left Robert," replied Père d'Aigrigny; "his description, his age, correspond with the age and description of the maréchal, — he has gone with the papers. One thing, however, greatly surprised your emissary."

"What was that?" asked Rodin.

"Up to this time he had had incessantly to combat the maréchal's hesitation; he had, beside, remarked his gloomy, despairing air. Yesterday, however, he found

him with an air so happy, so joyous, that he could not help asking the cause of this change."

"Well?" said Rodin and the princess at the same time, and greatly surprised.

"'I am really the happiest man in the world,' replied the maréchal; 'for I go with joy and happiness to accomplish a sacred duty.'"

The three actors in this scene looked at each other in silence.

"And who could have effected this sudden change in the maréchal's mind?" said the princess, with a pensive air. "We relied fully on annoyances, irritations of all sorts, to throw him into this adventurous enterprise."

"I cannot fathom it," said Rodin, after some meditation; "but, no matter, he has gone, and we must not lose a moment in acting with his daughters. Has he taken that cursed soldier with him?"

"No," said the Père d'Aigrigny, "unfortunately, no. Distrustful, and informed of what has passed, he has redoubled his precautions; and a man who might have been so useful to us against him, in any desperate emergency, has been struck by this contagion."

"Who is that?" asked the princess.

"Morok. I might have relied on him in all, for all, and through all, and he is lost to us; for, if he escape this pestilence, it is feared that he will fall a victim to a horrible and incurable disease."

"What do you mean?"

"A few days since he was bitten by one of the large dogs in his menagerie, and next day the animal went mad."

"How horrible!" exclaimed the princess. "And where is the wretched man?"

"They have conveyed him to one of the temporary hospitals established in Paris, for only the cholera has as yet declared itself with him; and, I repeat, it is a two-

fold misfortune, for he was a man devoted, resolute, and ready for any and every thing. But the soldier, the guardian of the orphans, will be inaccessable, and yet through him only can we reach the daughters of Maréchal Simon."

"That is evident," replied Rodin, musing.

"Especially since the anonymous letters have aroused his suspicions," added the Père d'Aigrigny; "and —"

"Apropos of anonymous letters," said Rodin, suddenly interrupting Père d'Aigrigny, "there is a circumstance you ought to know, and I'll tell you why."

"What is it about?"

"Besides the letters you know of, Maréchal Simon has received many others of which you are ignorant, and in which, by every possible means, it was tried to incite his wrath against you, by reminding him of the many causes he had for hating you, and jeering him because your sacred character placed you beyond the reach of his vengeance."

Père d'Aigrigny looked at Rodin with surprise, and exclaimed, turning red in spite of himself, "But for what purpose has your reverence acted in this way?"

"In the first place, to turn away from myself any suspicions that might be awakened by these letters; then, in order to increase the rage of the maréchal to madness, by incessantly reminding him both of the just grounds of his hatred against you and the impossibility of his touching you. This, joined to other exciting causes of anger, vexation, and irritation, which the brutal passions of this man of war would make to boil within him, must impel him to this crazy enterprise, which is the consequence, and the punishment, of his idolatry for a miserable usurper."

"Yes," said Père d'Aigrigny, with a constrained air; "but I would observe to your reverence that it might, perhaps, be dangerous thus far to excite Maréchal Simon against me."

"Wherefore?" inquired Rodin, fixing a piercing glance on Père d'Aigrigny.

"Because the maréchal, urged beyond bearing, and recollecting nothing but our mutual hatred, might seek — might meet me —"

"Well, and what then?" asked Rodin.

"Well, he might forget that I was a priest; and then —"

"Ah, you are afraid?" said Rodin, disdainfully, and interrupting D'Aigrigny.

At these words of Rodin, "You are afraid," the reverend father sprung from his seat, then resuming his *sang-froid*, he added:

"Your reverence is right. Yes, I should be afraid — yes, under such circumstances, I should be afraid that I might forget I am a priest, and recollect only that I have been a soldier."

"Really?" said Rodin, with supreme contempt; "and are you really, then, at this absurd and savage point of honour? Has not your cassock extinguished this vivid fire? And this swordsman, whose poor brain, empty and hollow as a drum, I was sure to ferment by pronouncing some magic words for such stupid fighters, 'Military honour — oath — Napoleon II.' — so, had this swordsman conducted himself toward you with any violence, it really then would have required some effort on your part to have remained calm?"

And again Rodin fastened his hawk's gaze on the reverend *père*.

"It is useless, I think, for your reverence to make any such supposition," said D'Aigrigny, who with difficulty repressed his emotion.

"As your superior," replied Rodin, sternly, "I have a right to ask you what you would have done if Maréchal Simon had raised his hand against you?"

"Sir!" cried the reverend father.

"There are no sirs here, we are priests," said Rodin, harshly.

Père d'Aigrigny bowed his head, and with difficulty repressed his anger.

"I ask you," continued Rodin, pertinaciously, "what would be your course if Maréchal Simon had struck you? Is that a plain question?"

"Cease, I entreat," said Père d'Aigrigny. "Cease."

"Or, if you like it better, — suppose he had smitten you on both cheeks," continued Rodin, with cool doggedness.

Père d'Aigrigny, pale, his teeth clenched, his hands clasped, was a prey to a kind of vertigo, at the bare supposition of such an outrage, whilst Rodin, who had not, unquestionably, urged the question but from a strong motive, raised his flaccid eyelids, and seemed to watch intently the significant symptoms which developed themselves on the disturbed countenance of the ex-colonel.

The devotee, more and more under the charm of the ex-*socius*, seeing the position of D'Aigrigny was as painful as it was false, felt her admiration for Rodin increase.

At length, the Père d'Aigrigny, resuming his *sang-froid* gradually, replied to Rodin, in a tone of forced calmness:

"If I had to undergo such an outrage, I would entreat the Lord to give me resignation and humility."

"And assuredly the Lord would hear your prayers," replied Rodin, coldly, satisfied with the experiment he had tried on D'Aigrigny. "Besides, you are now forewarned; and it is very unlikely," he added, with an atrocious smile, "that the Maréchal Simon will return here, in order to put your humility to so rude a test. But if he should return," and Rodin again fixed a deep and searching glance on the reverend *père*, — "if he should return, you will display, I doubt not, to this brutal swordsman, in spite of his violence, all the resignation and humility of a soul that is really Christian."

Two knocks on the door, discreetly given, interrupted the conversation.

A *valet de chambre* entered, bearing on a waiter a large sealed envelope, which he handed to the princess, and then left the room.

Madame de Saint-Dizier, having by a look requested Rodin's leave to open the letter, hastily perused it, and a malignant satisfaction overspread her features.

"There is hope!" she exclaimed, addressing Rodin. "The demand is strictly legal; and the consequences may be such as we desire. In a word, my niece may from to-morrow be threatened with complete destitution. She, so prodigal. What a change for her whole life!"

"Then, there may be at last some hold on this untamable character," said Rodin, with a meditative air; "for until now, all has failed. They say, certain happiness makes persons invulnerable;" and he bit his flat and dirty nails.

"But to obtain the result I desire, I must exasperate the pride of my niece; and it is, therefore, absolutely requisite that I see her, and converse with her," added Madame de Saint-Dizier, musingly.

"Mlle. de Cardoville will refuse this interview," remarked Père d'Aigrigny.

"Perhaps," replied the princess; "she is so happy that her audacity must be at its height. Yes, yes, I know her. I will write to her in such a way that she will come."

"Do you think so?" said Rodin, with a doubtful air.

"Do not doubt it, father," replied the princess, "she will come; and, once her pride called in question, we may hope for everything."

"We must act, then, madame," said Rodin, "and that, too, promptly; the moment approaches; hatred and distrust are aroused, — there is not a moment to lose."

"As to hatred," replied the princess, "Mlle. de Car-

doville has seen how the process she began has ended in reference to what she calls her detention in a lunatic asylum, and the sequestration of the Simon girls in the convent of Ste. Marie. Thank Heaven, we have friends everywhere; and I know from good authority that it will be rejected for want of sufficient proofs, in spite of the anxiety and interference of certain parliamentary magistrates, who shall be marked — and well marked."

"Under these circumstances," replied Rodin, "the departure of the maréchal gives us great latitude, and we must act immediately with these girls."

"But how?" inquired the princess.

"We must first see them," answered Rodin, "talk with them, study them, and then act."

"But the soldier will not leave them for a second," said Père d'Aigrigny.

"Then," replied Rodin, "we must talk to them before the soldier and gain him over to ourselves."

"He! The hope is madness!" cried Père d'Aigrigny. "You do not know his military probity, — you do not know the man!"

"Not know him?" said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders. "Did not Mlle. de Cardoville present me to him as her liberator, when I denounced you as the soul of this machination? Was it not I who restored to him his ridiculous imperial relic, his cross of honour, at Doctor Baleinier's? Was it not I who brought the two girls from the convent, and placed them in their father's arms?"

"Yes," replied the princess; "but since then my cursed niece has divined all, discovered everything. She told you herself, father —"

"That she considered me as her mortal enemy," said Rodin. "True. But has she said so to the maréchal? Has she named me to him? And, if she has, has the maréchal told it to the soldier? It may be so; but it is not certain. Under any circumstances we must ascer-

tain this. If the soldier treats me as an unmasked foe, we shall see; but at first I shall accost him as a friend."

"And when?" asked the devotee.

"To-morrow morning," replied Rodin.

"Oh, oh, my dear father!" exclaimed Madame de Saint-Dizier, with affright. "If the soldier takes you for an enemy, beware!"

"I am always on my guard, madame. I have made more terrible fellows than he hear reason;" and the Jesuit smiled a ghastly smile, and showed his black teeth. "The cholera, for instance!"

"But if he treats you as an enemy, and refuses to admit you, how will you contrive to obtain access to the daughters of Maréchal Simon?" inquired D'Aigrigny.

"I really do not know," answered Rodin; "but as I mean to do so, I shall do so."

"*Mon père*," said the princess, suddenly, and after meditating, "these young girls have never seen me. If, without giving any name, I could get to see them —"

"That, madame, would be perfectly useless, for I must first know what I shall resolve upon with respect to these orphan girls. At any risk, I will see them, therefore, and have a long conversation with them; then my plan once decided on, your aid may be useful to me. Under any circumstances, be so kind as to be ready to-morrow morning, in order to accompany me, madame."

"Where to, *mon père?*"

"To Maréchal Simon's."

"To his house?"

"Not exactly to his house. You will go in your carriage, I then take a hackney-coach. I shall endeavour to get access to these young girls; and, during this time, you will await me at some small distance from the maréchal's abode. If I succeed, if I require your aid, I will come to you, and you will receive my instructions, and nothing will appear as if concerted between us."

"Very well, reverend father; but I really tremble

when I think of your interview with that brutal soldier," said the princess.

"The Lord will watch over his servant, madame," replied Rodin. "As for you, father," he added, addressing D'Aigrigny, "send off to Vienna instantly the note prepared, that it may announce your knowledge of the departure and expected arrival of the maréchal. All is foreseen. This evening I will write more fully."

Next morning, about eight o'clock, Madame de Saint-Dizier, in her carriage, and Rodin in his hackney-coach, went towards the house of Maréchal Simon.

CHAPTER XVII.

HAPPINESS.

MARÉCHAL SIMON had been gone two days. It was eight o'clock in the morning, and Dagobert, walking with the greatest care on the tips of his toes, that the floor might not creak, crossed the salon which led into the bedchamber of Rose and Blanche, and placed his ear discreetly at the door of the young girls' apartment. Killjoy followed his master in the same fashion, and seemed to walk with equal precaution. The countenance of the soldier was disturbed and uneasy, and he muttered to himself:

"Let us hope these dear children have heard nothing during the night that would alarm them; and it would be better that they should not know of this event until it cannot be longer concealed. It might make them very melancholy; and the poor little dears are so gay and so happy, since they knew how dearly their father loves them. They bore his departure so well, and they must not be told of the misfortune of this night, it would distress them so much."

Then listening again, the soldier continued:

"I hear nothing — nothing! They always awake early, too; perhaps it is their grief."

Dagobert's reflections were interrupted by two bursts of hearty laughter, which suddenly sounded in the interior of the young girls' bedchamber.

"Come, come; they are not so sad as I thought,"

said Dagobert, breathing a little more at his ease; "probably they know nothing."

The laughter then increased so much, that the soldier, delighted at such gaiety, so very unusual to "his children," felt himself at first quite affected, and, for a moment, his eyes became moistened, when he remembered that the orphans had at last resumed the happy serenity of their years. Then passing from softness to joy, his ear still listening, his body half bent, his hands on his knees, Dagobert rejoicing, happy, his lips betraying a mute pleasure, shaking his head a little, he accompanied, with a still laugh, the increasing hilarity of the two girls. At last, as nothing is more contagious than mirth, and the worthy soldier felt at his ease, he concluded by laughing out loud, and with all his might, without knowing why, and only because Rose and Blanche laughed with all their heart.

Killjoy, unaccustomed to see his master in such high spirits, looked at him, first in deep and silent astonishment, and then began to bark with an interrogating air.

At this sound, the laugh of the two girls suddenly ceased, and a clear voice, somewhat tremulous from its joyfulness, cried:

"What, Killjoy! Is it you who have come to awaken us?"

Killjoy comprehended, shook his tail, laid back his ears, and, lying down close at the door, replied by a low whine to the call of his young mistress.

"Monsieur Killjoy," said the voice of Rose, who could scarcely contain herself from a fresh burst of laughter, "you are very early."

"Then could you tell us the hour, if you please, Monsieur Killjoy?" added Blanche.

"Yes, mesdemoiselles, it has struck eight o'clock," suddenly responded the deep voice of Dagobert, who accompanied this joke with an immense burst of laughter.

A slight cry of joyful surprise was heard, then Rose said:

"Good morning, Dagobert."

"Good morning, my dears. You are very lazy this morning."

"That is not our fault; our dear Augustine has not yet been to us," said Rose. "We were waiting for her."

"That is it," said Dagobert to himself, his features becoming overcast. Then he replied aloud, with some embarrassment in his tone, for the worthy fellow was a bad hand at falsehood, "My children, your *gouvernante* went out early this morning. She has gone into the country on business, and will not come back for some days; so to-day you had better get up by yourselves."

"That good Madame Augustine!" said Blanche, with interest. "I hope it is not anything unpleasant that she has gone away so suddenly, is it, Dagobert?"

"No, no, not at all; it is on business," replied the soldier, "to see one of her relations."

"Oh, so much the better," said Rose. "Well, Dagobert, when we call, you may come in."

"I will return in a quarter of an hour," said the soldier, walking away; then he thought, "I must put that booby, Jocrisse, on his guard, for the fellow is such a babbling blockhead that he will blab everything."

The name of this supposed dolt will serve as a natural transition to let us know the cause of the merry mood of the two sisters, who were laughing at the numerous silly tricks of this simpleton.

The two young girls had risen and were both dressed, having assisted each other. Rose had dressed Blanche's hair, and it was Blanche's turn to dress Rose's hair. The two young creatures thus grouped offered a picture that was very graceful.

Rose was seated before a toilet, her sister standing behind her arranging her soft, chestnut hair. Happy, joyous age,—still so close to infancy, that its present

felicity soon causes a forgetfulness of past suffering! Then the orphans felt more than joy, it was happiness, pure, deep, and, henceforth, unutterable happiness. Their father adored them; their presence, far from being painful to him, filled him with delight. At last assured himself of the love of his children, he had no longer, thanks to them, any sorrow to dread. For these three beings, so certain of their mutual and ineffaceable affection, what was a momentary separation?

This stated and understood, we may conceive the innocent gaiety of the two sisters, in spite of the departure of their father, and the joyous, happy expression which animated their lovely countenances, on which was already reviving their colour, which had so much faded. Their reliance on the future gave them an air of resolution and decision, which added an additional charm to their lovely features.

Blanche, whilst arranging her sister's hair, dropped the comb, and as she stooped to pick it up Rose anticipated her, and gave it to her, saying:

"If it is broken, you must put it in the basket for the handles."

And the two girls laughed heartily at these words, which referred to a notable absurdity of Jocrisse. The supposed simpleton had broken the handle of a cup, and the *gouvernante* of the young girls reprimanding him, he had answered:

"Be easy, madame; I have put the handle in the basket for handles."

"The basket for handles?"

"Yes, madame, it is in that that I put all the handles I break, or shall break."

"Gracious goodness!" said Rose, wiping her eyes, moist with mirthful tears, "how ridiculous to laugh at such absurdities!"

"Yet it is so droll," answered Blanche, "how can we help it?"

"All I regret is, that our father is not here to laugh also."

"He is so happy when he hears us merry."

"We must write to him to-day the story of our basket for handles."

"And that of the feather-brush, in order to show him that, according to our promise, we have not any uneasiness during his absence."

"Write to him, sister? No. You know very well he will write to us, but we cannot reply to him."

"That's true. Then — an idea! Let us still write to him at his address here. Dagobert will put our letters in the post, and, when he returns, our father will read our correspondence."

"You are right. What a charming idea! What things we will write to him, for he loves our little follies so much."

"And so do we. We must confess that we like nothing better than to be gay."

"Oh, certainly! The last words of our father have given us so much courage, have they not, sister?".

"When I hear them, I feel quite brave about his departure."

"And when he said to us, 'My children, I will confide to you all I can confide to you. I had to fulfil a sacred duty, for that I am compelled to quit you for some time; and although I was so blind as to doubt your affection, I could not resolve on abandoning you, yet my conscience was disquieted, agitated; my chagrin so overwhelmed me that I had not the strength to make up my mind, and my days passed on in hesitations, filled with anguish; but once certain of your affection, all these doubts have suddenly ceased. I have felt that I was not sacrificing one duty to another, and so laying up remorse for myself, but that it was necessary to accomplish two duties at once, duties both sacred, and which I can now fulfil with joy, heart, and happiness.'"

"Ah, go on, go on, sister!" exclaimed Blanche, rising to approach Rose, "it seems as if I heard our father; and let us recall his words, as they will support us if we have any feelings of sorrow at his absence."

"Yes, will they not, sister? But, as our father said besides, 'Instead of being vexed at my departure, be glad, be proud I leave you, in order to effect something noble and generous. Imagine that there is, in a certain portion of the world, a poor, suffering, oppressed orphan, forsaken by everybody; that the father of this orphan was my benefactor; that I swore to him to devote myself to his son; and that now the life of that son is in danger. Say, my children, should you be sorry to see me quit you to go to the assistance of this orphan?'"

"'Oh, no, no, dear father,' we replied; 'for then we should not be your daughters,'" said Rose, with excitement; "'go, and rely upon us. We should be too unhappy if we thought that our sorrow could weaken your courage — go at once! and each day we shall repeat with pride, it is to fulfil a noble and great duty that our father has left us, and, therefore, it is sweet to us to await him.'"

"How charming, how comforting, is the idea of duty, of devotion, sister dear!" responded Blanche. "Only see how that gives our father the courage to leave us without regret, and gives us the courage to await bravely his return."

"And then with what tranquillity we enjoy this hour! These afflicting dreams, which foretold such sad events, torment us now no longer."

"I told you so, sister, and now we shall be, for the future, quite happy."

"And are you like me? For I feel myself stronger, more courageous, and in a disposition to brave every possible disaster."

"So do I; so see how strong we have become! Our

father in the centre, you on one side, and I on the other, and — "

"Dagobert as advanced guard, Killjoy as rear-guard, and then the army will be complete."

"Then let a thousand squadrons come and attack us," added suddenly a deep and joyous voice, interrupting the young girls, and Dagobert appeared at the door of the room, which was ajar. Happy and merry, it was really pleasant to see him. The old fellow had heard a little of what was going on before he presented himself to the girls.

"Ah, Mister Inquisitive, you were listening!" said Rose, gaily, as she came out of the apartment with her sister, and entering the salon, they both kissed the soldier affectionately.

"Well, I must say I was listening, and I am only sorry for one thing, and that is, that I had not ears as large as Killjoy, that I might have heard more. Good, dear girls, how I love you! *Mordieu!* and saying to Dull Care, 'Half-step to the left — quick march, and be hanged to you!'"

"Very fine! You'll see he'll tell us to swear presently," said Rose to her sister, laughing heartily.

"Eh, *ma foi!* Well, perhaps, occasionally it might be so," replied the soldier, "it comforts, calms me so; for if, to enable us to sustain the attacks of wretchedness, we could not swear by the five hundred names of — "

"Will you be quiet!" said Rose, putting her pretty hand on the gray moustache of Dagobert to stop him; "if Madame Augustine heard you now — "

"Poor *gouvernante!* So gentle, so timid!" said Blanche.

"How you would frighten her!"

"Yes," said Dagobert, trying to conceal his growing embarrassment, "but she does not hear us, because she is gone into the country."

"Good, dear woman," observed Rose, "when speaking

to us of you, she made use of a word which was very touching, and displayed her excellent heart. She did, indeed, for she said, 'Ah, mesdemoiselles, compared with the affection of M. Dagobert, I know that my attachment is so recent that it must seem nothing to you, that you are in no need of it, and yet I feel I have a right to devote myself to you as he does.'"

"No doubt, no doubt, she has a worthy heart, a heart of gold," replied Dagobert; then he added, in a lower voice, "It would seem as if they turned the conversation on her purposely, poor woman!"

"Besides, my father made a most proper choice when he selected her," said Rose, "the widow of an old soldier, who was in the wars with him."

"At the time when we were so melancholy," said Blanche, "how uneasy and how anxious she was to comfort us!"

"Twenty times I have seen the big tears in her eyes, as she looked at us," remarked Rose. "Ah, she loves us tenderly, and we return her love. And with reference to this, Dagobert, do you know we have a little project when our father returns?"

"Hush, sister," said Blanche, laughing; "Dagobert will not keep the secret."

"Yes, he will, though. Won't you, Dagobert?"

"Why," said the soldier, whose embarrassment was now extreme, "you will do right, perhaps, to say nothing about it."

"You can't keep anything from Madame Augustine."

"Ah, M. Dagobert, M. Dagobert!" continued Blanche, gaily, and menacing the soldier with the end of her finger, "I suspect you very much of having flirted with our good *gouvernante!*"

"I — I — flirted?" said the soldier.

The tone, the expression of Dagobert, as he uttered these words, was so singular that the two sisters burst into loud laughter.

Their mirth was its height, when the door of the salon opened.

Jocrisse advanced several steps, and then, with a loud voice, announced:

"M. Rodin."

And at the moment the Jesuit glided swiftly into the apartment, as if to take possession of the ground; for once in, he believed his end was attained, and his reptile eyes glittered.

It would be difficult to paint the surprise of the two sisters and the anger of the soldier at this unexpected visit. Running to Jocrisse, Dagobert seized him by the collar, and exclaimed:

"Who gave you leave to introduce any one here without first asking me?"

"Forgive me, M. Dagobert," said Jocrisse, going on his knees, and clasping his hands with an air as stupid as it was supplicating.

"Be gone! Leave the house! And you also!" added the soldier, with a menacing air, and turning towards Rodin, who was already approaching the young girls with his hypocritical air.

"Will you go?" cried the soldier to Jocrisse, who was still on his knees, for owing to this position the man was able to utter a certain number of words.

"M. Dagobert," said Jocrisse, in a doleful voice, "pardon me for having introduced this gentleman here without giving you notice, but, alas! my head is all in a whirl in consequence of the misfortune that has happened to Madame Augustine."

"What misfortune?" exclaimed Rose and Blanche together, and going towards Dagobert with a gesture of uneasiness.

"Will you get out?" replied Dagobert, shaking Jocrisse by the collar, in order to compel him to rise.

"Speak, speak!" said Blanche, interposing between

the soldier and Jocrisse. "What has happened to Madame Augustine?"

"Mademoiselle," said Jocrisse, hastily, and in spite of the interference of the soldier, "Madame Augustine was attacked with cholera last night and they have —"

Jocrisse was unable to finish, for Dagobert gave him a blow with his fist in the jaw, such as he had not bestowed for a long time, and then exerting his strength, which was still considerable for his age, the old dragoon, with an iron grasp, lifted Jocrisse on his legs, and, with a violent kick in the seat of honour, sent him headlong into the chamber adjacent.

Then turning to Rodin, with his cheeks inflamed and his eye sparkling with rage, Dagobert pointed to the door with an expressive gesture, saying, in an angry voice:

"And now, sir, it's your turn; and if you do not go, and directly too, why —"

"Allow me to pay my respects, my dear sir," said Rodin, going backwards towards the door, and bowing to the young girls.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DUTY.

SLOWLY retreating before the angry fire of Dagobert's glances, Rodin managed to gain the door by a sort of retrograde movement, while at the same time he sent out a kind of sidelong, penetrating look towards the orphans, who were visibly agitated by the well-concerted carelessness of Jocrisse, who, in spite of Dagobert's express prohibition not to mention before the sisters the calamity which had befallen their *gouvernante*, had thus daringly, and in defiance of his received order, presumed to act in direct contradiction to the wishes of his superiors. Hastily approaching the soldier, Rose exclaimed, "Is it, indeed, true that poor dear Madame Augustine has been attacked by cholera?"

"No, I do not know — I believe not," replied the soldier, with hesitation; "besides, what consequence is it to you?"

"Dagobert, you wish to conceal this sad affliction from us," said Blanche. "I remember now your embarrassment when you were speaking of our *gouvernante* a little time since."

"If she is ill, we ought not to forsake her; she was full of commiseration for our sorrows, and we ought to have pity on her sufferings."

"Come, sister, let us go to our chamber," said Blanche, advancing a step towards the door at which Rodin had paused, and was listening to this conversation with deep curiosity, at the same time reflecting very seriously.

"You shall not leave this room," said the soldier, in a decided tone, to the two sisters.

"Dagobert," replied Rose, with firmness, "a sacred duty is in question, and it would be cowardice to shrink from it."

"I tell you that you shall not go out!" replied the soldier, stamping his foot with impatience.

"My good friend," observed Blanche, with an air as resolute as her sister's, and with an excitement that tinted her lovely cheek with a rosy hue, "our father, in quitting us, has given us an admirable example of devotion to duty, and he will not excuse us if we forget his lesson."

"What!" exclaimed Dagobert, greatly excited, and going towards the two sisters to prevent them from leaving the room, "do you think that if your *gouvernante* had the cholera, I would allow you to go to her under the pretext of duty? Your duty is to live, and live happy, for your father's sake, and for my sake into the bargain; so not another word of this mad scheme."

"We do not run any danger in going to our *gouvernante* in her chamber," said Rose.

"And if there were any danger," added Blanche, "we ought not to hesitate; so, Dagobert, be good, and let us pass."

Suddenly Rodin, who had been watching this scene with deep attention and meditation, started, his eye sparkled, and a ray of malicious delight lighted up his visage.

"Dagobert, do not refuse us," said Blanche; "you would do for us what you reproach us for desiring to do to another."

Dagobert had up to this moment impeded the passage of the Jesuit and the two sisters, by putting himself before the door; after a moment's reflection he shrugged his shoulders, moved on one side, and said, calmly:

"I was an old fool. Well, young ladies, go. If you

find Madame Augustine in the house, I permit you to remain with her."

Surprised at the confident manner and the words of Dagobert, the two young ladies remained motionless and undecided.

"If our *gouvernante* is not here, where is she, then?" asked Rose.

"Do you imagine that I will tell you in your present state of excitement?"

"She is dead!" cried Rose, turning pale.

"No, no — calm yourself," said the soldier, quickly. "No, by your father I swear no; only at the first attack of the malady she desired to be carried out of the house, fearing that those in the house might catch the contagion."

"Good, courageous woman!" said Rose, much affected; "and you would not —"

"I would not allow you to leave this house; nor shall you, if I have to lock you up in your chamber!" exclaimed the soldier, stamping his foot angrily; then recollecting that the babbling indiscretion of Jocrisse had caused this lamentable chagrin, he added, with great anger, "Oh, I'll break my cane over that scoundrel's back!"

So saying he turned towards the door, where Rodin still remained silent and attentive, concealing beneath his usual impassiveness the dark designs which he had conceived.

The two young girls, no longer in doubt as to the departure of their *gouvernante*, and persuaded that Dagobert would not inform them whither they had conveyed her, remained pensive and melancholy.

At the sight of the priest, whom he had for an instant forgotten, the old soldier's rage increased, and he said to him, savagely:

"What, are you still here?"

"Allow me to remark to you, my dear sir," replied

Rodin, with that air of ease and kindness which he so well knew how to assume on an occasion, "that you kept before the door, which naturally prevented my leaving the apartment."

"Well, now then, nothing hinders you, so go — be off!"

"I will be off with all possible haste, my dear sir, although I think I have a right to express my astonishment at such a reception."

"We are not talking of reception, but departure, — so go."

"I came, my dear sir, to talk with you."

"I have no time for talking."

"It is on a very serious subject!"

"I have no serious subject, but that of remaining with these children."

"Very well, my dear sir," said Rodin, from the threshold: "I will no longer importune you. Excuse my intrusion, but as the bearer of news — excellent news, from the Maréchal Simon, I came —"

"News of my father!" said Rose, quickly; and going towards Rodin, "Oh, tell us, sir, tell us, and quickly!"

"You have news of the maréchal! You?" said Dagobert, casting a suspicious glance at Rodin; "and what is your news, then?"

But Rodin, without immediately replying to this question, advanced from the threshold of the door, and returned to the salon, looking first at Rose, and then at Blanche, with admiration. Then he said:

"What pleasure it is to me to come and bring some good tidings to these dear young ladies! I see them as I left them, always graceful and charming, although not so sad as the day when I brought them from that wretched convent where they were kept prisoners. With what delight did I see them cast themselves into the arms of their valiant and valued father!"

"That was their place; but yours is not here," said

Dagobert, rudely, and holding the door open at Rodin's back.

"Confess, at least, that I was in my place at Doctor Baleinier's," said the Jesuit, looking at the soldier with a crafty smile; "you know, in that lunatic asylum, — the day on which I restored to you that noble imperial cross, which you so deeply regretted; the day when that excellent young lady, Mlle. de Cardoville, by saying that I was her liberator, prevented you from strangling me — a trifle, my dear sir. Yes, indeed, really, young ladies, as I have the honour to tell you," added Rodin, with a smile, "this brave soldier was about to strangle me; for it must be owned that, in spite of his age, and with no desire to offend him, he has an iron gripe. Eh, eh, eh! The Prussians and Cossacks ought to know that better than myself."

These few words reminded Dagobert and the young girls of the services which Rodin had really rendered them. Although the maréchal had heard Mlle. de Cardoville speak of Rodin as a very dangerous person, whose dupe she had been, the father of Rose and Blanche, incessantly worried and tormented, had not mentioned this fact to Dagobert; but the old grenadier, instructed by experience, and despite the many appearances favourable to the Jesuit, felt an irresistible repugnance for him, and replied, harshly:

"It is no consequence whether my gripe is strong or not, but —"

"If I allude to your harmless vivacity on that occasion, my dear sir," said Rodin, in a soft tone, and interrupting Dagobert, whilst he advanced still nearer to the two sisters by that kind of creeping, reptile step which was peculiar to him, "if I alluded to it, it was from recalling, involuntarily, the trifling services which I was but too happy to render to you."

Dagobert looked fixedly at Rodin, who instantly dropped his flaccid lid on his repulsive eye.

"In the first place," said the soldier, after a moment's silence, "a right-hearted man never refers to services he has rendered, yet you have done so already three times."

"But, Dagobert," said Rose, in a low tone, "if he has news of our dear father?"

The soldier motioned with his hand, as if to beg the young girl to allow him to speak, and then continued, keeping his eye steadily fixed on Rodin:

"You are a knave, and I am not a raw recruit."

"I a knave?" said Rodin, with a stolid air.

"Decidedly! You think to come over me with your fine phrases; but it won't do, old gentleman. Listen to what I say. One of your black-gown gang stole my cross; you restored it to me — well! Some one of your black-gown gang carried off these children; you found them — well! You denounced the renegade, D'Aigrigny — true. But all this only proves two things: the first, that you were rogue enough to be the accomplice of such vagabonds; the second, that you were rogue enough to denounce them; and these two acts are both infamous, and I suspect you. So now go — begone! — the sight of you is not wholesome for these children."

"But, my dear sir —"

"There is no 'but' in the question," cried Dagobert, in an angry tone. "I tell you what, when one of your sort of men pretends to perform a good action, it is time to be on one's guard, because it is quite sure some mischief is intended, and therefore, don't you see, I suspect you! So be off!"

"Certainly," replied Rodin, coldly, and choking down his extreme annoyance and disappointment, for he had reckoned on easily managing the soldier. "I admit that you have a right to form your own opinion as to my views and motives; but still, if you only reflect for an instant, what interest can I have in deceiving you? Of if even the desire existed, what means have I of indulging it?"

"I neither know nor care; but this I am very sure of, that you mean to drive me to do something desperate to you, by insisting upon remaining here, whether I will or no."

"Well, well, my dear sir, I have had the honour to state the purpose of my coming, therefore —"

"You bring tidings of Maréchal Simon, I think you say?"

"Precisely so! I am fortunate enough to have very pleasing and gratifying intelligence concerning M. le Maréchal," replied Rodin, again approaching the sisters, as though to regain the ground he had lost, and addressing himself to them, he said, "Yes, my dear young ladies, I bring you news of your brave and noble father."

"Then come with me directly," cried Dagobert; "you can tell me all you have heard or know in my own room."

"How? — deprive these dear young ladies of the happiness of hearing news which — but no, no; you cannot be so cruel or indifferent to their feelings."

"Bombs and cannons!" thundered forth Dagobert, pale with rage; "have you not sense enough to see that I shrink from turning an old man like you out of the room? But, by the powers above us, my patience will be exhausted in a minute, and, if you do not take yourself away quickly, I shall be obliged to drop you from the top to the bottom of the staircase."

"Come, come!" replied Rodin, mildly; "don't put yourself into a passion with a poor old fellow like myself; I am not worth it. No, no, be calm; let us go into your room, as you say. I will tell you what I have to communicate, and then, you sad, naughty, passionate man, you will be vexed and sorry that you hindered these poor dear children from sharing in the pleasure of hearing such good news; and that shall be your punishment. Mind, I tell you all the punishment I shall inflict or desire for you."

So saying, and with another low bow, Rodin, who could scarcely restrain his rage and disappointment, passed by Dagobert, who shut the door after him, and made a signal of intelligence to the two sisters to remain there till his return.

"Well, Dagobert, what news of our dear father?" inquired Rose, eagerly, of the soldier, as a quarter of an hour after his quitting the room with Rodin he returned to the anxiously expecting sisters.

"Oh, merely nothing more than that the old wiseacre had contrived to find out that your father was gone and in excellent spirits. He is also acquainted with M. Robert. How or in what manner he learned all this, is more than I know," added the soldier, with a thoughtful, meditative air; "but it is an additional reason for being on my guard against him, and mistrusting all he says or does."

"And what were the tidings he brought of our father?" inquired Rose.

"A friend of this vile deceiver (for I know and feel certain he is one), who, he says, knows your father, met him about five and twenty leagues from hence; and if that be the case, 'tis just possible the maréchal might have charged him, upon reaching Paris, either to see you himself or send some person to you to let you know that he had proceeded thus far safely, was in health, and trusted soon to see you again."

"Oh, what happiness!" exclaimed Rose.

"Ah, now, Dagobert," cried Blanche, "you see how wrong you were to suspect the poor old man. How could you behave so rudely to him?"

"I don't repent of the reception I gave him, I can tell you."

"Oh, don't you? What, not now, Dagobert?"

"No, I don't. I have my reasons, and the best and strongest is, that when I saw him come in just now, and

begin twirling and twisting to get at you, I felt a sort of cold chill strike to the very marrow of my bones, without being able to account for it. If I had perceived a serpent crawling towards you, and striving to throw its deadly coil around you, I could not have shuddered with a more mortal dread. I know very well that he can do you no harm in my presence; but I know not how it is, my children, I tell you candidly that, after all the services he has rendered us, I had the greatest difficulty in the world to prevent myself from throwing him out of the window. Now this is such a very unnatural mode of proving one's gratitude that I feel sure and certain there must be something dangerous about people capable of inspiring such a feeling of aversion instead of regard."

"Dear, good Dagobert!" said Rose, in a caressing tone, "'tis the excess of your affection for us that renders you so suspicious; and your very mistrust shows your love for us!"

"Ah, yes," added Blanche, fondly patting the shoulder of the old soldier; "you do love your two children, very, very dearly, don't you now, Dagobert?" and both sisters fixed their innocent looks upon the old man, as though they were about to effect some purpose arranged beforehand.

This was, however, one of Dagobert's suspicious days. So, after wistfully gazing from one lovely face to the other, the old soldier shook his head and replied:

"Come, come, young ladies, all this coaxing is not for nothing; you have got some favour to ask of me, I know you have; so let's have it. I'll have no beating about the bush."

"Well, dear Dagobert," said Rose, "you know we always tell the truth."

"Oh, yes, Dagobert!" chimed in Blanche, "we only want a very little trifle; nothing but what is quite reasonable, and that you could grant quite easily, if you only would!"

So saying, each sister approached the soldier, who was still standing, and resting her clasped hands on his shoulder, looked at him with a most insinuating smile.

"Now, then," said Dagobert, looking alternately from side to side, "all I have to do is to keep my ground. Here is some rather difficult affair to bring out. Oh, don't shake your heads, — I am sure of it!"

"Oh, Dagobert, do pray listen patiently and indulgently to the little, tiny favour we are going to ask; you who have so often praised us for possessing the courage and resolution becoming the daughters of a brave soldier!"

"To the point, to the point!" said Dagobert, who began to feel somewhat uneasy at all these oratorical preliminaries.

Just as the sisters were about to speak, a gentle knock was heard at the door. (The lesson Dagobert had bestowed upon Jocrisse had been of the most wholesome description, it having consisted in his immediate dismissal from the house.)

"Who is there?" inquired Dagobert.

"'Tis I — Justin, M. Dagobert," replied a voice.

"Come in."

A servant belonging to the household, moreover a faithful, honest fellow, appeared at the door.

"What do you want?" inquired the soldier.

"M. Dagobert," replied Justin, "there is a lady below in a carriage, who has sent her footman to inquire whether she can speak to M. le Duc or the young ladies. She has been informed of M. le Duc's absence, but mesdemoiselles were at home; upon which she begged to be allowed to see them, saying that her business was to collect alms for a charitable purpose."

"Did you see the lady? Do you know her name?"

"I did, not think of inquiring, M. Dagobert but she has quite the looks of a great personage; her carriage is magnificent, and the servants wear rich liveries."

"This lady has come to collect money for a charitable purpose!" said Rose to Dagobert; "no doubt to aid some benevolent design; and since she has been told that we are at home, it does not seem to me that we can refuse to see her."

"What do you think, Dagobert?" inquired Blanche.

"Why," answered the old soldier, "I don't see myself what harm a lady can do; it is not like that old plotter of mischief I just now got rid of; besides, I shall not leave you." Then, addressing Justin, he said, "Show the lady up-stairs."

The man departed.

"Why, now, Dagobert, I really do believe you suspect something about this lady whom you do not even know!"

"Ah, my children, what cause had I for mistrusting my own good and worthy wife? but still, she it was who gave you into the power of those priests, and that, too, without even thinking that she did wrong, but solely in obedience to her scoundrelly confessor."

"Poor Madame Françoise! 'tis quite true, Dagobert; and yet I am sure she loved us as tenderly as if we had been her own children!" said Rose, mournfully.

"When did you hear of her?" asked Blanche.

"The day before yesterday. She is fast recovering; the air of the small village in which is situated Gabriel's curacy suits her admirably, and while he is away she is keeping his house."

At this moment the two folding doors of the salon were thrown open, and the Princesse de Saint-Dizier entered with a respectful and graceful curtsey, holding in her hand one of those scarlet velvet purses employed in Catholic churches in collecting charitable contributions.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE COLLECTION.

We have already observed that the Princesse de Saint-Dizier could, upon occasion, assume the most captivating manners and winning appearance; having, moreover, preserved all her youthful powers of fascination, she knew how and when to put on the irresistible coquetries of her earlier days; and more than once had she called to her aid the insinuating smile, the dulcet voice, which had subdued so many hearts, to further her present schemes of fanatical bigotry and aggrandisement. And so artfully did Madame de Saint-Dizier unite the grace and dignity of the high-bred woman with the soft simplicity of a warm-hearted, unpretending individual, that in no one instance did the victim she sought to entrap escape her seducing assumption of character.

Such was the Princesse de Saint-Dizier as she presented herself before the daughters of Maréchal Simon and Dagobert. She was admirably dressed in a robe of gray watered silk, which concealed the somewhat superabundant embonpoint of her figure. She wore a becoming small black velvet hat, and a profusion of light curls shaded her still handsome countenance, while the insinuating smile, which played upon her lips and bestowed a look of amenity and benevolence to her features, displayed her white and even teeth.

Spite of the habitual timidity of the sisters, they, as well as Dagobert, found themselves unable to withstand the charm of look and manner in their visitor, who,

advancing towards Rose and Blanche, gracefully curtsied, and said, in a tone of honeyed softness:

"Have I the honour to speak to the Mlles. de Ligny?"

But little accustomed to have themselves addressed by their father's honoured title, the sisters gazed at each other in silent embarrassment, which was at length relieved by Dagobert, who, perceiving their hesitation, took upon himself to reply to the interrogatory by saying:

"These young ladies, madame, are the daughters of Maréchal Simon, but they are seldom called by any other name than that of Simon."

"Ah!" cried Madame de Saint-Dizier, "such amiable modesty well becomes these pretty young girls, and well accords with what I have heard of them. Let me hope, however, they will pardon me for addressing them by a name which recalls one of the most brilliant victories achieved by their brave father."

At these flattering and conciliatory words, Rose and Blanche cast a grateful look towards Madame de Saint-Dizier, while even Dagobert, gratified and proud of praises addressed equally to the marèchal and his daughters, felt his confidence in their visitor rapidly increase.

Still speaking in her winningly soft and well modulated voice, the princess continued:

"I come to you, my young friends, in full confidence that you who have had the opportunity of witnessing the continued exercise of charity and every noble virtue, on the part of your father, will bestow your aid in behalf of those unfortunate beings stricken with that awfully dreadful disease, the cholera. I myself am one of the patronesses of an institution for that purpose, and whatever assistance you may think proper to bestow, I can only assure you it will be most thankfully received."

"'Tis we who should thank you, madame," replied Blanche, with graceful eagerness, "for having deigned to associate us in your good work."

"Allow me," said Rose, "to fetch all we have it in our power to offer, and to present it with the sincerest wishes that our mite may be serviceable."

Then exchanging a look with her sister, Rose quitted the apartment and entered the adjoining chamber, which formed their bedroom.

"Be seated, madame, if you please," said Dagobert, more and more charmed by the words and manners of the princess. "Pray take a chair while Rose is gone to fetch her money-bag."

Then, after the princess had sat down on the seat offered her by the old soldier, he hastily added:

"You must excuse my making so free as to call one of the daughters of Maréchal Simon by her name, just as if she were my own child; but you see, madame, I was with their blessed mother when they were born, and they seem as natural to me as if they were my own children."

"And, indeed, madame," continued Blanche, "next to our dear father, there is nobody we love and respect so much as our dear, good Dagobert, who is the best, the tenderest, and most devoted friend we possess."

"I can well believe all you say, my dear young friend," replied the artful woman, "for well do you and your charming sister appear calculated to inspire an attachment and devotion such as I am persuaded your worthy guardian here feels for you." Then turning towards Dagobert, the princess added, with one of her most winning smiles, "A devotion as honourable to those who inspire it as those who experience it."

"True, madame, quite true," said Dagobert; "I feel that I am every way honoured and flattered by being permitted to devote all my poor energies to the welfare and preservation of the noble maréchal's dear children. But here comes Rose with her little hoard."

As he spoke, the being he named appeared at the entrance of the apartment bearing a small but well-filled

purse, made of green silk. This she presented to the princess, who had already watched the entrance door with the impatience of a person who expects the coming of an individual who appears not according to promise. This movement, however, escaped the notice of Dagobert.

"We are very sorry, madame," said Rose, "that we cannot make a better offering to your charitable institution, but, in truth, all the money we possess in the world is in that purse."

"Gold!" exclaimed the visitor, as she perceived a number of louis glitter through the meshes of the purse; "let me assure you, young ladies, that what you are pleased to style a humble offering has not its fellow amid the rich and great." Then, bestowing on the sisters one of her most insinuating glances, the princess added, "This sum was doubtless devoted to affording some fresh pleasure, amusement, or an additional ornament for your toilet, the merit of the gift becomes therefore the greater. I see plainly I had not too highly estimated the goodness and generosity of your natures; but when I see you thus voluntarily impose on yourselves privations ordinarily so painful to young persons of your age —"

"Oh, no, madame!" interrupted Rose; "pray let me assure you that the trifle we are enabled to offer is no sacrifice on the part of either my sister or myself."

"And I believe you," replied the princess, with a smile of winning sweetness; "loveliness such as it has pleased nature to endow you with may well feel indifferent as to the artificial aid of the most studied toilet, while minds generous and noble as yours would naturally prefer the delights of benevolence to every mean and earthly enjoyment."

"Madame!"

"Come, come, young ladies," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, smiling, and assuming her motherly air, "don't

let my commendation embarrass you. At my age, flattery avails but little, and what I say to you is meant as though speaking to my own daughters, for you may suppose I am quite old enough to be your mother, nay, your grandmother, even."

"And, indeed, madame," said Rose, "you may quite believe that it would render my sister and myself so pleased and proud to think our trifling assistance had enabled you to relieve any of the unfortunate beings in whose behalf you are so charitably exerting yourself, for I make no doubt you frequently meet with most painful and distressing cases."

"True, my dear young lady," answered the pretended charitable visitant; "we do, indeed, meet the most harrowing facts as connected with the objects of our sympathy; but then again we are consoled and comforted by observing the deep interest which all classes of society take in their misfortunes, as well as the pity so spontaneously and generously bestowed; and I can assure you that, in my office of collector of charitable donations, I have a better chance than others of appreciating the noble devotion I meet with, as well as the promptitude to rush to the aid of their suffering fellow creatures. Indeed, I may venture to assert that, so contagious is benevolence that —"

"There, young ladies!" exclaimed Dagobert, triumphantly interrupting the princess, in the excess of his desire to construe the last-spoken words as favourable to the opposition he had evinced to the sisters' desire of visiting their sick *gouvernante;* "now are you convinced after this good lady has spoken so sensibly? You hear her say that in some cases devotion becomes contagious. Now, nothing is more to be dreaded and avoided than contagion, and for that reason —"

Here the soldier was interrupted by the entrance of a servant to announce that a person was waiting to see him.

The princess veiled her satisfaction at this little hindrance to the old man's train of reasoning under an air of the most natural indifference and unconcern, although the fact of Dagobert's being called away had been arranged previously to her own coming, and anxiously expected by her for some time, as affording her the opportunity of working out her errand during the temporary absence of the old soldier from the young creatures he so tenderly and sedulously guarded. While Dagobert, much annoyed at being obliged to quit the room, said to the princess, with a look of intelligence:

"Pray, madame, let me thank you for your excellent remarks touching the contagion attendant upon overzeal and devotion. I should also esteem it a favour if, ere you go, you would first say a little more on the same subject; by repeating your former observations to these young ladies, you will render them a great service, as well as infinitely oblige their father and myself. I am compelled to leave you for a short time, madame, but I shall quickly return, for I would thank you again and again for setting the minds of these dear children at rest on a subject we do not happen to agree upon." Then going close up to the sisters, Dagobert whispered, "You cannot do better, my children, than listen to this excellent lady." Then bowing low and respectfully to the princess, he quitted the room.

Directly the door had closed on the old soldier, the feigned visitant, although impatient to profit by the absence of Dagobert to carry out the instructions she had just received from Rodin, said, in the calmest voice, and most natural, unembarrassed manner:

"I did not quite comprehend the last words of your old friend, or rather he, I think, misunderstood mine. When I spoke to you but now of the generous contagion of feeling, I was very far from intending to blame that feeling, for which, on the contrary, I experience the greatest possible admiration."

"Oh, yes, madame," responded Rose, quickly, "I am sure you do, and it was so we understood you to mean."

"And if you only knew, madame," added Blanche, exchanging a significant glance with her sister, "how exactly your words apply to our own position at this precise moment."

"I was quite certain of being well understood by such hearts as yours," resumed the charitable visitant; "doubtless devotion is contagious, but then it is the cant again of generosity and heroism. You can scarcely credit the noble and affecting instances I daily witness; how I am hourly struck by the most touching and affecting acts of courageous tenderness, of noble devotion. But so it is," continued Madame de Saint-Dizier, piously rolling her eyes, "and let all praise and glory be, as justly due, given to the Lord above, who deigns to rule and direct the hearts of his weak and erring family here on earth; but bless God it is as it is, and that I am enabled, my dear young ladies, with truth to say that all ranks and conditions vie with each other in deeds of purest Christian charity. If you could but see, even in the temporary hospitals established for the purpose of bestowing the earliest succours on such as are stricken by contagion, what emulation, what eager devotion and disregard of self prevails! Poor and rich, young and old, females of all ages, flock around the unfortunate beings who are the objects of our care, and esteem themselves but too happy in being permitted to watch by their sick pillow, or, if needs must be, whisper words of soft consolation to such as are encompassed within the black shadow of death."

"You see, dear Blanche," said Rose, addressing her sister, "that it is for persons to whom they are utterly unknown that so many noble-minded persons so unhesitatingly risk their lives."

"Most assuredly it is," replied the pious visitant. "Only yesterday I was moved even to tears while visit-

ing a temporary hospital established not far from your abode, nay, I may say close to your house. One large chamber was filled with a number of poor destitute creatures, brought there almost in a dying state. All at once I saw a lady, a friend of mine, enter, accompanied by her two daughters, as young, as charming, and as charitably disposed as yourselves. Without a moment's delay or hesitation, the three placed themselves at the service of the medical attendants, received their directions, and waited upon the unfortunate patients with a zeal and tenderness not to be surpassed by the most lowly worshippers of our most blessed religion."

The sisters exchanged a look of indescribable earnestness and deep fervour as they listened to words so calculated to excite their enthusiastic minds, and fan into a flame the heroic sentiments of their generous natures. Their sudden alarm and evident emotion, upon learning the malady with which their *gouvernante* had been attacked, were not lost upon Rodin, whose quick penetration had at once perceived the important use to which this incident might be turned, and upon this hint Madame de Saint-Dizier had been duly instructed to act.

Continuing, therefore, to regard the orphans with a closely observant eye, in order to discover the effect of her words, the charitable messenger said:

"You may feel quite sure that foremost in the ranks of those bent upon this mission of charity are to be found the ministers of our holy religion. This very morning, while visiting the benevolent establishment I mentioned to you as being situated in your immediate neighbourhood, I was struck, in common with all present, at the sight of a young priest, or rather some angelic being descended from on high to afford the poor suffering females collected within its walls the comforts of religion. But he must have been more than human, I am sure; and if you could only have seen the Abbé Gabriel

under the trying and distressing circumstances I did, you would, like me — "

"Gabriel, the Abbé Gabriel!" exclaimed the sisters, as they exchanged looks of joyful surprise.

"Do you know him?" inquired the feigned philanthropist, with apparent astonishment.

"Well do we know him, dear madame, as the preserver of our lives."

"Yes, indeed, during a fearful storm at sea, when the vessel was utterly wrecked, and we should have perished but for him."

"Is it possible?" cried Madame de Saint-Dizier, affecting still greater amazement; "but are you quite sure we mean the same person?"

"Oh, no, madame; we cannot possibly be mistaken. You describe a being precisely resembling our Gabriel, — all courage, and the most heavenly forgetfulness of self!"

"And, besides," added Rose, with innocent warmth, "it is impossible to mistake our Gabriel, for he is as beautiful as the archangel whose name he bears!"

"With such long, light curling hair!" cried Blanche.

"And eyes of blue so soft and tender," continued Rose, "that it is impossible to look at him without being touched to the heart!"

"Oh, then it must be he!" replied the visitant; "and you can fully conceive the almost adoration he excites, and the almost incredible ardour and zealous charity created by his noble and saint-like example. How I wish you could have heard him this morning! With what tender emotion he praised the conduct of those noble-minded women who generously risked contagion itself to succour and console their sisters in trouble and mortal sickness! Alas! although I well know that the Almighty has enjoined lowliness and humility to his followers, I am obliged to confess that, as I listened to the Abbé Gabriel this morning, I could not prevent myself, all unworthy as I was, from being moved by a sort of holy

pride as I ventured to take my poor share in the praises so beautifully expressed. More especially when he said, with so touching a look and voice, 'That he seemed to recognise a dearly loved sister in those kind and devoted beings who thus ventured to kneel beside the sick-bed of such as all else had, perhaps, forsaken, that they might arrest the parting breath, or whisper peace to the departing soul!'"

"Sister!" cried Blanche to Rose, "do you hear those words? Oh, how happy ought those to be who have deserved such commendations!"

"Yes, happy, indeed!" exclaimed the princess, with well-assumed enthusiasm; "well may we indulge in such a pride as that occasioned by those holy praises, which seem as though uttered by the inspiration of God himself."

"Madame," said Rose, whose cheeks were flushed, and whose heart beat with the excitement created by the words of the affected devotee, "we have lost our mother, and our other parent is absent, but I feel assured that we can nowhere seek a friend more capable of advising us than yourself, whose heart is as noble as your disposition is kind and feeling."

"What advice do you require, my dear child?" asked Madame de Saint-Dizier, in her most insinuating tone and manner; "let me say my dear child, since the difference between our ages well warrants its application."

"Indeed, madame," interrupted Blanche, "we shall be delighted if you will call us both your children." Then, after slightly hesitating, she continued, "My sister wishes to ask your opinion on a subject we would fain know our duty upon."

"We had a kind and faithful friend, who lived with us as our instructress and companion; unhappily during the past night she has been seized with the cholera."

"How very dreadful!" exclaimed the devotee, feigning the utmost sympathy. "And how is she now?"

"Alas, madame, we do not know!"

"Not know? Why, is it possible you have not been to see her?"

"Pray do not accuse us of either indifference or ingratitude," said Blanche, mournfully; "indeed, madame, it is not our fault that we are not at this minute beside our suffering friend."

"And who prevents your going to her?"

"Dagobert; that dear, kind old man you saw here when you first came in."

"And wherefore should he object to your performing an act of positive duty, as well as gratitude, to your faithful guide and preceptress?"

"You consider, then, dear madame, that it is our duty to visit our sick friend, do you not?"

Instead of immediately replying to this direct appeal, Madame de Saint-Dizier continued to gaze from one sister to the other, as though bewildered with amazement; at last she said:

"Is it possible that young persons apparently so right-minded, and richly endowed with every fine quality of the soul, can ask me such a question?"

"I assure you, madame, that our first impulse was to hasten to our poor *gouvernante;* but then, Dagobert, whose excessive love for us makes him apprehensive of almost everything, feared there might be some risk, and so forbade our going."

"Besides," added Rose, "when our dear father quitted us, he placed us absolutely under Dagobert's charge, so that the recollection of his entire responsibility, joined to his tender solicitude for us, makes our worthy Dagobert think more than is needful of the danger we should incur in visiting our poor sick preceptress."

"Certainly," replied the devotee, "the scruples of your excellent friend are quite natural, as well as excusable; but his fears are, as you justly observe, wholly unfounded. For some time past I, as well as many of my friends, have

been in the daily habit of visiting these temporary hospitals, yet neither they nor myself have experienced the smallest ill effect. Besides, the cholera is now proved beyond a doubt to be without contagion, so that you may make yourselves quite easy as regards the absence of all danger in paying a visit to your suffering friend."

"Whether there be danger or no, madame," said Rose, "it is enough for us to be told that duty summons us to the sick-bed of our *gouvernante*."

"I doubt it not, my dear young friends; and, indeed, your sick friend might well accuse you of ingratitude, or even cowardice, in abstaining from visiting her. But," continued Madame de Saint-Dizier, with well-assumed fervour, "it is not alone of earthly opinion we should stand in awe, we must seek to deserve and obtain the pardon of the Lord from whom proceed these awful manifestations of wrath, as well as his favour and protection for ourselves and those belonging to us. You have had the misfortune to lose your mother, I believe?"

"Alas, yes, madame!"

"Well, my dear young friends, then let us console ourselves with the assurance of her being among the number of the elect in heaven; for of course," added the princess, as though thinking aloud, "your dear parent died a Christian death, and on her death-bed received the last sacraments of our holy Mother Church?"

"We were living in the very wilds of Siberia at the time we lost her," said Rose, sorrowfully, "and she died of cholera. Besides which, madame, there was no priest at all near enough to our abode to have been able to attend her last moments, if even she had wished it."

"Gracious heavens!" almost shrieked the princess, with an alarmed and agitated manner; "then your poor mother expired without the aid or consolations of a minister of our blessed religion?"

"My sister and myself watched beside her after we had buried her in the grave dug for her by Dagobert," said

Rose, while her eyes filled with tears, "and we all prayed to God to take her into heaven, as well at least as we knew how to pray."

"My poor dear children!" cried the devotee, in a voice expressive of the deepest affliction.

"What ails you, madame?" asked the orphans, much startled at this sudden emotion.

"Alas, my poor girls! spite of the many virtues which adorned your excellent mother, I grieve to tell you that she has not yet been received into heaven."

"What mean you, madame?"

"Having, unhappily, died without the last sacraments having been administered, her soul is condemned to wander in purgatory until the day of the Lord's mercy, although her deliverance may be considerably hastened by means of the prayers which the church says daily for the redemption of souls from purgatory."

Madame de Saint-Dizier assumed an air so melancholy and full of mournful conviction, as she pronounced these words, that the poor girls, whose hearts were imbued with the deepest and truest filial affection, readily believed the princess's alarms for their mother's eternal repose were sincere; and with ingenuous sorrow bewailed their having been hitherto kept in ignorance of the horrors of purgatory.

The devotee, perceiving by the unfeigned grief and distress depicted on the countenances of the sisters that her infamous deception had worked the desired effect, added, in a soothing tone, "You must not allow yourselves to despair, my children; the Lord will, sooner or later, receive your mother into the joys of paradise. But are there no means by which the deliverance of her precious soul can be accelerated through your endeavours?"

"Oh, tell us if there be, dear madame, we implore you!" cried the weeping girls; "we can think of nothing but to pray God, night and day, to pardon

our dear mother for dying without a priest, and to receive her into heaven. If there be aught else, we beseech you to direct us what we can do."

"Poor children, how much they interest me!" said the princess, with pretended emotion, as she pressed a hand of each within her own. "Take comfort, I say again," resumed she. "You can do much for your mother's repose; and, in preference to every other intercessor, you may obtain the Lord's favour for her, whereby her soul may be delivered from purgatory, and admitted into the realms of everlasting felicity."

"But tell us what we must do, dear madame, to obtain this great, this inestimable blessing!" exclaimed both sisters at once.

"By deserving the mercy of the Lord by your praiseworthy and edifying conduct; and in no manner can you render yourselves more acceptable in his sight than by discharging your debt of duty and gratitude to your poor *gouvernante;* and I feel quite assured that so striking a proof of Christian zeal, as the Abbé Gabriel would call it, would be most efficaciously counted equal to the release of your mother's spirit from the pains of purgatory; for, in his infinite mercy, the Almighty ever lends a favourable ear to daughters interceding for their mother, and who, to obtain that prayer, offer to Heaven some great or holy action."

"Ah," exclaimed Blanche, "it is not alone of our sick *gouvernante* we have to think."

"Here comes Dagobert!" said Rose, hastily, as she listened to the ascending steps of the soldier, as he heavily mounted the staircase.

"Recover yourselves! Be calm! Say not a word of this to your worthy friend when he enters," said the princess, hastily; "he would be unnecessarily uneasy, and, foreboding dangers where none existed, would in all probability place obstacles in the way of your generous resolution."

"But how shall we be able to discover whither our *gouvernante* has been conveyed?" inquired Rose.

"Oh, we shall find that out, I doubt not. Rely upon me," whispered the false adviser; "I will see you again very shortly, when we will devise our plot, — our plot to obtain the speedy deliverance of your poor mother from the miseries she now endures."

Scarcely had Madame de Saint-Dizier pronounced these last words, with every appearance of the tenderest solicitude, than the old soldier entered the room, his countenance beaming with joy and content; indeed so delighted did he seem with the subject of his thoughts that he failed to observe the agitation the sisters could not immediately subdue.

Anxious to divert the attention of the old soldier, the princess arose, and, proceeding towards him, said, "I would not take my leave of these young ladies without expressing to you the high opinion I entertain of the great qualifications and amiable dispositions with which the Almighty has endowed them."

"I am not the less pleased, madame, to find such is your opinion, that it happens precisely to agree with my own. Let me hope that you have lectured the little headstrong things well, and explained clearly to them all about the contagion of devotion."

"Make yourself perfectly easy, my good sir," said the devotee, exchanging a look of intelligence with the sisters; "I have said all that was needful on the subject, and we now understand each other thoroughly!"

These words effectually satisfied Dagobert; and Madame de Saint-Dizier, after having taken an affectionate leave of the orphans, returned to her carriage, and proceeded to rejoin Rodin, who was waiting for her in a fiacre a little way off, in order to learn the result of her interview with her destined victims.

CHAPTER XX.

THE TEMPORARY HOSPITAL.

AMONGST a great number of temporary hospitals opened at the period of the cholera in all the quarters of Paris, there was one very extensive in a vast ground floor of a house in the Rue du Mont Blanc. This apartment, empty at the time, had been generously placed by the proprietor at the disposition of the authorities. To this place they conveyed indigent patients, who, suddenly attacked by contagion, were considered in too alarming a state to be immediately conveyed to the hospitals. It must be said, to the praise of the Parisian population, not only voluntary gifts of every kind were forwarded to these branch establishments, but persons of every condition, of rank, in humble life, artisans, artists, gave their services, night and day, in order to establish regularity, to exercise an active superintendence in these extra hospitals, and to come to the assistance of the medical men, that they might enforce their prescriptions with respect to the cholera patients.

Females of every class shared in this generous contention to be of service to their fellow creatures in affliction; and if nothing were to be so much respected as the susceptibilities of modesty, we should quote, amongst a thousand instances, that of two young and charming women, one of whom belonged to the aristocracy and the other to the upper classes of the citizens, who for four or five days, during which the epidemic raged with the utmost violence, came every morning to share with the

admirable Sisters of Charity the perilous and humble cares which they bestowed on the indigent sick who were brought to one of the temporary hospitals of a certain quarter of Paris.

These traits of brotherly charity, and many others which have taken place in our time, show how vain and interested are the impudent pretensions of certain of the ultramontane party. To hear them, it would seem as if they and their monks only, by virtue of their being wholly detached from all terrestrial affairs, are capable of giving to the world those wonderful examples of self-denial and of ardent charity which are the pride of humanity. To hear him, it would seem as if there were in society nothing comparable to the courage and devotion of the priest who goes to administer to a dying fellow creature. Nothing is more admirable than the Trappist who (if we are to believe them) pushes his evangelical self-denial so far as to break up and cultivate the land belonging to his Order! Is not this ethereal? Is it not divine? To till, sow the earth, whose results are for ourselves! This is really heroic, and we admire the thing as much as we possibly can.

However, whilst we recognise all that is good in a good priest, we ask, with all humility, whether they were monks, clerks, or priests, — those doctors of the poor who, at all hours of the day and night, hastened to the wretched couch of the afflicted; those doctors who during the cholera risked their lives a thousand times, with as much disinterestedness as intrepidity; those learned persons, those young practitioners, who, from love of science and humanity, solicited as a favour, as an honour, that they might go and brave death in Spain, when the yellow fever was decimating the population? Was it celibacy, was it disgust of the world, that gave such strength of mind to so many generous men? Did they hesitate to sacrifice their lives, occupied as they were with their pleasures, or the sweet cares of their

families? No, not one of them for this reason renounced the pleasures of life. The majority of them had wives and children, and it was because they knew the joys of paternity that they had the courage to expose themselves to death to save the wives and children of their brethren. If they did, in truth, act so valiantly for good, it was because they lived according to the eternal views of the Creator, who made men for society, and not for the sterile isolation of the cloister.

Are they Trappists, those millions of cultivators of the earth, those offsprings of the soil, who till and water with their sweat those lands which are not their own, and that for wages inadequate to the first wants of their children?

In fine (this may seem puerile, perhaps, but we hold it to be incontestable), are they monks, clerks, or priests, — those intrepid men who, at all hours of the night and day, rush with fabulous intrepidity into the midst of the flames of the furnace, scaling burning rafters, fiery walls, to preserve property which does not belong to them; to save persons unknown to them; and that simply without pride, or advancement, or fame, or any other reward than the daily bread they eat; without any honorary mark of distinction beyond the soldier's uniform which they wear; and that, moreover, without in the least pretending to a monopoly of courage and devotion, or of being some day canonised and enshrined? And yet we think that so many hardy sappers, who have risked their lives in twenty fires, who have snatched from the flames old men, women, and children, who have preserved whole cities from the ravages of fire, have at least as much merit before God and their fellow creatures as St. Polycarp, St. Fructueux, St. Privé, and others more or less sanctified.

No, no; thanks to the moral doctrines of all ages, all people, and all systems of philosophy, — thanks to the progressive emancipation of humanity, the sentiments of

charity, devotion, and fraternity are almost become natural instincts, and develop themselves wonderfully in mankind, when it is in that condition of relative happiness for which God has endowed and created it.

No, no; certain ultramontane intriguants and disturbers do not comprise solely, as they would have us believe, the monopoly of devotion of man to man, — the self-denial of the creature for the creature, in theory and practice. Marcus Aurelius is equal to St. John, Plato to St. Augustine, Confucius to St. Chrysostom. From antiquity to our times, maternity, friendship, love, science, glory, and liberty have, irrespective of all orthodoxy, an army of glorious martyrs to oppose to the saints and martyrs of the calendar. Yes, we repeat, the monastic orders who the most pique themselves on their devotion to humanity have never done more for their fellow creatures than during the period of the cholera did so many gay young men, so many pleasing and delightful women, so many heathen artists, so many freethinking men of letters, so many materialist misled men.

Two days had passed since the visit of Madame de Saint-Dizier to the orphan girls. It was about ten o'clock in the morning. The persons who had voluntarily been in attendance during the night at the provisional hospital in the Rue du Mont Blanc were just being relieved by other volunteer assistants.

"Well, gentlemen," said one of the new arrivals, "what is the state of things? Has there been any decrease to-night in the number of patients?"

"Unfortunately, no; but the doctors think that the contagion has now attained its extreme degree of intensity."

"Then we may hope to see a decrease."

"And amongst those whom we replace has any one been attacked?"

"Yesterday eleven of us came, to-day we are but nine."

"That is sad intelligence. And who are the two persons who have been so suddenly smitten?"

"One of the victims is a young man of five and twenty, a cavalry officer on leave, and who has been affected as though by a lightning stroke. He was dead in less than a quarter of an hour; and, although such circumstance is by no means unprecedented, yet we have been all greatly affected by it."

"Poor young man!"

"He had a word of warm encouragement, of hope, for all. He had so completely revived the hopes of many, that several among them who had less the cholera than the fear of cholera have left the hospital almost cured."

"What a pity! Such a worthy young man! Yet he died a glorious death; for there is as much courage required to die thus as in battle."

"There was only one to rival him in zeal and courage, a young priest of angelic appearance, named the Abbé Gabriel. He is indefatigable; he hardly reposes for a few hours; running from one to the other, and doing everything for everybody. He forgets none. His spiritual consolations, which he gives from the inmost depths of his heart, are not the mere lip-words which he deals out professionally. No, no, I have seen him weep at the death of a poor woman whose eyes he had closed after a distressing scene of agony. Oh, if all priests resembled him!"

"Yes, indeed, a good priest is so worthy of respect! And who is the other victim of the past night?"

"Oh, it was a fearful death! Let us not talk of it; I have still the horrid picture before my eyes."

"An attack of violent cholera?"

"If the unhappy patient had died only of this contagion, you would not have seen me so horrified at the recollection."

"Of what, then, did he die?"

"It is really a fearful tale. Three days ago they brought hither a man whom they believed to be suffering solely from cholera. You have no doubt heard speak of this person, the tamer of wild beasts who attracted all Paris to the Porte St. Martin?"

"I know the man you speak of, — his name is Morok; he played a scene with a black tamed panther."

"Precisely so; and I was present at a very singular representation, at the end of which a stranger, an Indian, for a bet, as I have heard, jumped on to the stage and killed the panther."

"Well, then, only imagine that at Morok's menagerie — he having been first brought hither as a cholera patient, and, indeed, presenting all the symptoms of the contagion — a fearful distemper suddenly broke out."

"A distemper?"

"Hydrophobia."

"And he has gone mad?"

"Yes; he declared he had been bitten a few days ago by one of the bulldogs who guard his menagerie. Unfortunately, he only made this confession after the terrible attack which cost the life of the unfortunate young man whom we so deeply regret."

"How did that happen?"

"Morok was in a chamber with three other patients. Suddenly seized with a kind of delirium, he got up, uttering horrid cries, and rushed like a madman into the corridor. The unfortunate young man whom we lament presented himself, and endeavoured to stop him. The struggle still more excited Morok's frenzy, and he threw himself on him, biting and tearing him, until at last he dropped down in horrible convulsions."

"Ah, indeed, it is fearful! And in spite of every assistance Morok's victim — "

"Died in the night in the midst of terrible suffering, for the excitement was so great that a brain fever rapidly declared itself."

"And is Morok dead?"

"I do not know. He was to have been sent to a hospital yesterday after having been manacled during his fit, which usually follows these violent crises; but in the meantime, until he could be taken hence, he was shut up in a chamber at the top of the house."

"But there can be no hope for him."

"He must be dead. The doctors declared that he had not four and twenty hours to live."

The persons who carried on this conversation were in an antechamber situated on the ground floor, in which those persons assembled who came voluntarily to offer their help and assistance. On one side this apartment communicated with the rooms of the hospital, and on the other with the vestibule, of which the window opened on to the courtyard.

"Oh," said one of the persons looking through the window, "only see what charming young persons have just alighted from that handsome carriage! How extremely they are alike! Really the resemblance is extraordinary!"

"Twin sisters, no doubt. Poor young girls! They are in mourning; perhaps they have lost a mother or father."

"They seem to be coming this way."

"Yes, they are ascending the steps."

And at this moment Rose and Blanche entered the antechamber with a timid and disturbed air, although a feverish and determined excitement sparkled in their eyes.

One of the two individuals who had been conversing, moved by the embarrassment of the young girls, advanced towards them with a tone of kind politeness.

"Do you seek any one, young ladies?"

"Is not this the temporary hospital of the Rue du Mont Blanc?"

"It is."

"A female named Madame Augustine du Tremblay, we are told, was brought here two days since. Could we see her?"

"I must observe to you, young ladies, that there is some danger in entering into the apartments of the patients."

"It is a very dear friend whom we desire to see," replied Rose, in a firm and gentle tone which spoke a disregard of danger.

"I really cannot tell you with certainty, mademoiselle," replied the gentleman, "whether the person you inquire for is here or not; but if you will take the trouble to enter the room on the left hand you will find the worthy Sister Martha there, who superintends the women's wards, and will give you all the information you may desire."

"Thanks, sir," said Blanche, curtseying gracefully, and with her sister she entered into the apartment that had been pointed out to her.

"Really they are very charming girls," said the gentleman, looking after the two sisters as they quitted the room; "it would be very terrible if —"

He could not finish.

Suddenly a tremendous uproar, mingled with cries of horror and alarm, was heard in the adjacent rooms. At the same moment two of the doors which communicated with the antechamber opened violently, and a great number of patients, the majority of whom were half naked, ghastly, and meagre, their faces drawn with fear, rushed hastily into the apartment, crying:

"Help! help! a madman!"

It is impossible to describe the desperate rush and struggle which followed this panic of affrighted persons as they pushed forward to the only door of the antechamber, in order to escape the danger they dreaded, and there contending and battling, and then going on

their hands and knees, trying to crawl out in order to escape by this narrow issue.

At the moment when the last of these frightened creatures contrived to reach the door, dragging himself along, completely exhausted, and with bleeding hands, — for he had been knocked down, and almost squeezed to death during the *mêlée*, — Morok, the object of so much alarm — Morok appeared.

He presented a horrid sight: a rag of a quilt was around his loins — his meagre and corpse-like loins — naked as well as his legs, around which were still the fragments of the ligatures that had confined him, and which he had broken. His matted, thick, yellow hair was hanging straight over his face, his beard seemed to stand on end, his eyes rolled fiercely and bloodshot in their orbits, glaring with unnatural lustre; the foam gathered on his lips, and from time to time he uttered hoarse, guttural sounds; the veins of his iron limbs were swollen almost to bursting, and he advanced by leaps like a wild beast, extending his bony and clenched hands.

At the moment when Morok had almost reached the issue by which those whom he pursued had contrived to escape, several persons in full health who had been attracted by the noise managed to close the door from without, as well as those which communicated with the wards of the hospital.

Morok found himself a prisoner.

He then ran towards the window to try and break it, and thus make his way into the courtyard, but suddenly stopping, he receded before the dazzling brilliancy of the windows, seized with the invincible horror which all persons attacked with hydrophobia experience at the sight of shining objects, and particlarly glasses.

Presently the sick persons whom he had pursued, huddled together in the courtyard, saw him through the window exhaust himself in furious efforts to open the

doors which had been closed upon him. Then recollecting the uselessness of his attempts, he uttered fierce cries, and began to turn rapidly about in the apartment like a wild beast which vainly seeks some issue from its cage.

Suddenly the spectators of this scene, who were looking through the windows, gave a loud shriek of anguish and affright.

Morok perceived the small door which led to the little apartment occupied by Sister Martha, and into which Rose and Blanche had but a few moments before retired. Morok, hoping to get out this way, pulled violently at the handle of the door, and contrived to open it half-way, in spite of the resistance he experienced from the other side.

For a moment the alarmed crowd saw in the courtyard the outstretched arms of Sister Martha and the orphan girls clinging to the door, and preventing it from being opened with all their might.

CHAPTER XXI.

HYDROPHOBIA.

At the sight of the violent and deadly struggles of Morok to force open the door of the chamber into which the orphan girls had flown for refuge, in company with Sister Martha, the terror of the numerous individuals belonging to the hospital who were assembled in agonising suspense in the adjoining court increased to a fearful degree.

"Sister Martha is lost!" exclaimed they, in affrighted tones.

"The door is incapable of offering a long resistance!"

"And there is no other means of quitting the room!"

"Two young females dressed in deep mourning are with Sister Martha."

"Oh, but," exclaimed a voice among the spectators, "it will never do to leave three helpless women exposed to the fury of this madman! Come on, friends," continued the intrepid individual, rushing up the flight of steps which led to the small antechamber known as Sister Martha's room.

"Hold, hold!" cried a number of voices, "'tis now too late to rescue those you would save; it would be folly to expose yourself in vain," and with these words several persons tightly grasped the daring man who was thus venturing his life, and forcibly held him back.

At this instant a cry arose of "Here is the Abbé Gabriel! He is always the first to rush to the succour of the distressed; see, he is coming from the rooms above. No doubt the noise has reached him!"

"He stops a minute to inquire the cause of all this disturbance!"

"What can he be going to do?"

It chanced that Gabriel, who had been engaged in administering religious consolation to a dying patient, had just learned that Morok, having succeeded in freeing himself from his bonds, had managed to escape by means of a small skylight in the chamber in which he had been temporarily confined; and foreseeing the dreadful mischief likely to result from such a circumstance, the young missionary, listening only to the noble impulse of his own courage, hastened forwards in the hope of preventing the evils he anticipated. By his orders one of the hospital servants followed him, carrying a brazier filled with burning embers, in the midst of which were several irons heated to a white heat; these irons were employed as cauteries by many of the surgeons during very severe cases of cholera.

A deadly paleness overspread the heavenly countenance of Gabriel, but a calm intrepidity dwelt on his fine forehead. Hurrying towards the scene of danger, and hastily dispersing those who flocked around and intercepted his passage, he directed his course towards the antechamber, but just as he approached it one of the patients cried, in a distressing tone:

"Ah, M. l'Abbé, it is useless your risking your life; those persons who can see into the apartment from the court say that Sister Martha is lost!"

Gabriel replied not, but quickly seized the key of the door; ere, however, he entered the chamber into which he was aware Morok had shut himself, he turned towards the servant carrying the brazier, and said, in a firm and steady voice:

"Are those irons thoroughly heated?"

"Oh, yes, M. l'Abbé, observe how white they are."

"Then await me here, and be ready at my first summons. As for you, my friends," continued he, address-

ing the poor, trembling crowd, who were literally shivering with terror, he said to them, "directly I have gone into that room, shut the door, and keep it closed — I will be answerable for all consequences; and mind," repeated he to the person who stood with the brazier, "come immediately I call you — but not an instant before!"

And then the young missionary, without further delay, undid the door.

At this instant a cry of terror, pity, and admiration burst simultaneously from the spectators of this scene, while those who had been nearest the entrance of the fatal chamber rushed precipitately, under the influence of involuntary alarm, to a spot of greater safety.

Casting his eyes upwards, as though invoking the protection of Heaven in the imminent peril to which he was about to expose himself, Gabriel pushed the door open — entered the room — and as quickly closed it again, thus shutting himself in with Morok, who by a last frenzied effort had managed almost entirely to pull open the door to which Sister Martha and the orphans clung with agonising dread, while they wildly shrieked aloud for help.

At the sound of Gabriel's footsteps Morok turned quickly around, and, at once abandoning his intention of forcing an entrance to the inner closet, he sprung furiously on the young missionary. In the meantime Sister Martha and the orphans, iguorant of the cause of the sudden retreat of their aggressor, availed themselves of the respite thus afforded to them to shoot a bolt withinside the door, and thus effectually to secure themselves from a fresh attack.

With haggard glare, and teeth convulsively clenched, Morok threw himself with extended hands on Gabriel with the intention of seizing him by the throat, but the missionary, whose rapid glance had well divined the coming shock, received it with unflinching firmness, and

at the moment when his infuriated adversary darted on him he caught him by the two wrists and forcibly and vigorously compelled him to lower his uplifted arms.

For a brief space Morok and Gabriel remained gazing on each other, breathless, silent, and motionless; then resuming the deadly struggle, the missionary throwing back his head, and assuming an attitude of resolute defiance, strove to prevent the endeavours of the wretched madman to seize him with his teeth, while he strove by continued springs and convulsive bounds to break from his hold.

Suddenly the beast-tamer seemed to become weak, his knees bent under him, his head grew livid violet and fell on his shoulder, his eyes closed. The missionary, believing that a temporary weakness had succeeded to the fit of madness, and that he was about to sink, ceased his grasp of him in order to give him aid. Feeling himself free, owing to his ruse, Morok suddenly sprang up in order to throw himself fiercely on Gabriel. Off his guard at this sudden attack, the missionary staggered as he felt himself seized and enfolded in the iron grasp of this madman.

Still redoubling his energy and efforts, struggling breast to breast, foot to foot, Gabriel in his turn made his enemy recede, and with a vigorous effort contrived to throw him and again grasped him by the hands to hold him down with his knee, almost without motion. Having in this way completely mastered him, Gabriel turned away his head to summon aid, when Morok with a desperate effort contrived to sit up and seize the left arm of the missionary between his teeth. At this sharp, deep, and terrific bite, which cut through his flesh, the missionary could not repress a cry of pain and affright. In vain did he try to disengage himself, his arm remained as if fixed in a vice between the convulsed jaws of Morok, who still maintained his hold.

This frightful scene lasted less time than is necessary to describe it, when suddenly the door leading to the vestibule opened, and several resolute persons, having heard from the affrighted patients the danger which the young priest ran, rushed to his succour, in spite of the desire he had expressed that no one should enter until he called.

The man who carried the small stove and the red-hot irons was with those who entered, and Gabriel, when he perceived him, said:

"Quick, quick, my friend, your irons,—I thought of them through a providence."

One of the men who came in had fortunately brought a blanket with him, and at the moment when the missionary contrived to extricate his arm from the teeth of Morok, whom he still kept down with his knee, they cast the blanket over the madman's head, who was then covered and bound without danger, and in spite of his desperate resistance.

Gabriel then arose, and tearing open the sleeve of his cassock, and baring his left arm, where there was visible a severe bite, bleeding, and of a blue colour, he made a sign to the man to approach; seized one of the red-hot irons, and twice with firm and sure hand applied the brand to his wound, with a heroic calmness which excited the admiration of all who beheld him.

But suddenly so many emotions, so intrepidly contended with, had a certain reaction; and Gabriel's brows were covered with heavy drops of perspiration; his long, brown hair clung to his temples, and he turned pale, and, staggering, lost all consciousness, so that he was obliged to be conveyed to an adjacent apartment in order to have certain restoratives applied.

By a singular chance the falsehood of Madame de Saint-Dizier had been borne out, although without her knowledge. In order to incline the orphans the more

surely to go to the temporary hospital, she had told them that Gabriel was there, which she did not believe, for she had, on the contrary, endeavoured to prevent their meeting, as it might be injurious to her projects, knowing as she did the attachment of the young missionary for the youthful orphans.

A short time after the terrible scene we have related, Rose and Blanche, accompanied by Sister Martha, entered into a large apartment with a most repulsive appearance, into which a great number of females suddenly seized with cholera had been admitted.

This vast chamber, generously lent to be converted into a temporary hospital, was richly decorated. The room then occupied by the sick women had served as a reception-room, and the white panels shone with sumptuous gildings; glasses magnificently framed separated the spaces between the windows, through which were seen fresh grass-plots in a delightful garden, already verdant and beautiful with the early blossoms of May.

In the midst of this splendour, these gilded cornices, on a floor formed of precious wood richly inlaid, were regularly laid four rows of beds of all shapes, the gifts of different persons, from the humble truckle-couch to the rich bed of carved mahogany.

This long apartment had been divided into two by a temporary wainscot running the whole length, and about four or five feet high, and thus they had contrived to establish the four rows of beds. This division ended a little way from each extremity of the apartment, and there were no beds in this reserved space, in which were the volunteer assistants when the sick had no occasion for their attentions. At one of these extremities was a high and magnificent marble chimneypiece, ornamented with gold bronze, on which were warmed different drinks. As a final trait to this picture with so singular an appearance, females belonging to the most different conditions of life voluntarily undertook in turns to watch the sick, whose

sobs and groans were always received by them with the consoling language of pity and hope.

Such was the place, at once singular and gloomy, into which Rose and Blanche hand in hand entered, some time after Gabriel had displayed such heroism in his struggle with Morok.

Sister Martha accompanied the daughters of Maréchal Simon, and, after having said a few words to them in a low voice, she pointed out to each of them one side of the division where the beds were ranged, then turned away to the other end of the apartment in order to give some directions.

The orphans, still under the effects of the extreme excitement caused by the peril from which Gabriel had saved them without their knowledge, were excessively pale, yet was their firm resolution in their eyes. Not only had they to accomplish for themselves an imperious duty of gratitude, and show themselves worthy of their brave sire, but there was also the salvation of their mother, whose eternal felicity might depend, as they had been told, on the proofs of Christian devotion which they gave to the Lord. It is unnecessary to add that the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, following Rodin's instructions, had in a second interview, cleverly contrived between herself and the two sisters without Dagobert's knowledge, by turns abused, excited, and fanaticised these poor, confiding, simple-minded, and generous girls, by urging to the most pitiable exaggeration all that was elevated and courageous in their nature.

The orphans having asked Sister Martha if Madame Augustine du Tremblay had been brought to this asylum within the last three days, the sister had replied that she did not know, but that by going through the women's wards they might easily learn if the person was there whom they sought.

The infamous devotee, Rodin's accomplice, who had cast the two children into the midst of such mortal peril,

had mendaciously affirmed that their *gouvernante* had been conveyed to this hospital.

Maréchal Simon's daughters had, both during their exile and during their painful journey with Dagobert, been exposed to very rude trials, but never had such a terrible sight as that which now presented itself been offered to their view.

The long row of beds, in which so many human creatures were lying, some writhing in pain and uttering deep groans, others giving forth the last deep sighs of agony, and others in the delirium of fever sobbing or calling loudly on the beings from whom death was about to separate them, — this spectacle, fearful even for men accustomed to illness, could not fail, according to the execrable idea of Rodin and his infamous accomplices, to cause a fatal impression on these two young girls, whom an excitement of feeling as generous and without reflection had compelled to this disastrous visit.

Then, to add to this fatal circumstance, which only occurred to them in all its poignant and profound bitterness when at the bedside of the first female they saw, it was cholera — that fearful death that had carried off the mother of the orphans!

Our readers will imagine the two sisters arriving in these vast apartments of such foreboding aspect, already much agitated by the terror with which Morok had inspired them, and commencing their sad search amongst those unfortunates, whose sufferings, whose agonies, whose death reminded them at each moment of the sufferings, agony, and death of their mother.

For one moment at the sight of this funereal chamber Rose and Blanche felt their resolution give way; a dark presentiment made them regret their heroic imprudence, and then they had for some minutes felt the painful shudderings of a chill and feverish attack, then their temples beat violently at intervals. But attributing these symptoms, of whose danger they were ignorant, to the

results of the fright which Morok had caused, all that was noble and courageous in them repelled these alarms, they exchanged an affectionate look, their courage revived, and both Rose on one side of the division, and Blanche on the other, began their painful search separately.

Gabriel, conveyed into the surgeon's apartment, had soon recovered. Thanks to his presence of mind and courage, his wound, cicatrised so promptly, could not have any serious consequences, and the wound dressed, he insisted on returning to the women's ward, for it was there that he was giving pious consolations to a dying female when he was told of the frightful dangers that might result from Morok's escape.

A few moments before the missionary entered this apartment, Rose and Blanche had arrived almost together at the termination of their distressing search, the one having traversed the left, and the other the right-hand division of the chamber.

The two sisters had not yet rejoined each other. Their steps had become more and more uncertain. As they advanced they were obliged to lean from time to time against the beds they passed; their strength was fast failing. Overcome by a giddiness, by pain and fright, they seemed only to move mechanically.

Alas! the orphan girls had been simultaneously struck with terrible symptoms of cholera. In consequence of that kind of physiological phenomenon of which we have already spoken,— a phenomenon very frequent with twins, and which had already several times displayed itself during two or three maladies, under which they had suffered at the same time,— once again this mysterious cause, submitting their organisation to simultaneous sensations and occurrences, seemed to resemble two flowers on the same stem, which by turns bud, blossom, and wither together.

Then the appearance of all the sufferings, all the agonies at which the orphans were present, as they traversed

the long chamber, had conspired to accelerate the development of this overwhelming distemper. Rose and Blanche had already, in their pain-stricken, agonised countenances, the deadly imprint of the contagion as they came forth, each on one side of the subdivision of the apartment which they had traversed without finding their *gouvernante*.

Rose and Blanche, separated until then by the high and long division, had not seen each other, but when at length they met a heartrending scene ensued.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL.

To the bright bloom of Rose and Blanche had succeeded a livid paleness, while their soft blue eyes, already sinking in their orbits, looked unnaturally large from the dark halos which surrounded them; their lips, lately so vermilion, had now assumed a dark violet hue, resembling that which had usurped the delicate transparent colouring of their cheeks and rosy tips of their slender fingers. One might have fancied that the bright red blood, so short a time ago coursing freely in their veins, had been changed by the blue frozen breath of death into the corpse-like lividness which now covered their lovely features.

As the sisters, tottering and almost sinking at every step, at length met at the termination of the screen, a cry of mutual terror and dismay arose from each, at the sight of the fearful inroads disease had already made in the countenance of both. "Why," they exclaimed, almost in the same breath, "and you, too, dearest sister, are ill, as I am!" Then rushing into each other's arms they burst into tears, and tenderly, gazing upon one another, said, "My sweet Rose, how very pale you look!"

"And so do you, dear Blanche."

"Do you feel a sort of icy shivering steal through your veins, as though your blood were changed to icicles!"

"Oh, yes, and my strength seems gone. I can scarcely distinguish one object from another."

"My throat and chest seem to burn like fire!"

"Can it be, dearest sister, that the hand of death is on us?"

"At least we shall, I trust, be permitted to die together."

"But what will become of our dear father?"

"And Dagobert?"

"Ah, dear sister!" exclaimed Rose (whose brain was evidently growing delirious), as she threw her arms around Blanche's neck. "Our dream — was true — see — see — the angel Gabriel has come to fetch us!"

And by a singular coincidence Gabriel at this moment entered the sort of half circle formed at each extremity of the salon.

"Merciful heaven!" exclaimed the young priest, "what do I see? The daughters of Maréchal Simon?" And, springing forward, he received the poor girls in his arms just as their own strength had forsaken them, and their languid heads, half closed eyes, and difficult respiration too truly betokened the rapid approach of death.

Sister Martha, who was close at hand, quickly answered Gabriel's cry for assistance, and by the aid of this excellent woman the dying sisters were carried to the bed reserved for the doctor, whose turn it was to watch the sick during the night.

Apprehensive lest this afflicting scene might operate unfavourably on the many sufferers already writhing under similar agonies as those which distorted the delicate limbs of Rose and Blanche, Sister Martha drew a large curtain so as to separate the orphans entirely from the rest of the salon.

So firmly had they clasped each other's hands during the violence of the convulsions which racked their tender forms, that it was found impossible to loosen their spasmodic grasp; and thus tenderly and lovingly entwined

they lay, while the usual remedies were applied,—remedies powerless, alas! to avert the deadly malady with which they were seized, but which, at least, seemed to afford a temporary cessation of their dreadful sufferings, and to restore a ray of reason and memory to their disordered and wandering brains.

At this moment Gabriel, standing at the head of their bed, contemplated them with ineffable tenderness and sorrow; the purest pity filled his heart, while tears of genuine grief trickled down his cheeks as he thought, with a shudder of impending evil, of the singular chance which thus rendered him a witness of the death of his two young and interesting relatives, so lately preserved by his intervention from the horrors of shipwreck and a watery grave; and in despite of his firm reliance on the wisdom of an all-wise superintending Providence, the missionary felt a cold chill creep over him, and an indefinite dread take possession of his mind, as he reflected on the melancholy fate of the young and innocent sisters, the death of Jacques Rennepont, and the wily arts by which M. Hardy had been induced to bury himself amid the cloistered solitudes of St. Herem, and almost at his last gasp to become a member of the Order of Jesus; and a fearful association of ideas presented themselves to the young priest, as he mentally counted over the names of four members of the Rennepont family, who had been in rapid succession borne down by a continuance of adverse circumstances; and with increased alarm he asked himself how it came to pass that a fatality so favourable to the base interests of the followers of Ignatius Loyola should thus have occurred. The surprise of the young missionary would, however, have given way to the most profound horror, had he known the part Rodin and his accomplices had taken in effecting the death of Jacques Rennepont, by exciting the evil passions and vices of the unfortunate man, through the medium of Morok; as well as the diabolical schemes

concocted by Rodin, and executed by Madame de Saint-Dizier, who, by working upon the noble and devoted natures of Rose and Blanche, had instigated them to an act of overstrained heroism, ending in their death.

Struggling momentarily to arouse themselves from the deep lethargy in which their senses had been plunged by the various remedies so ineffectually applied, the sisters half opened their large blue eyes, already covered with the thick mists of approaching dissolution, and suddenly perceiving the tender heavenly compassion with which Gabriel was observing them, the poor girls, whose brains still wandered, exclaimed delightedly:

"Sister! sister! see, see! the archangel has kept his promise! There he is, just as he appeared to us in our dream when we were in Germany, — yes — and as he came to us three days ago! Look, dear sister, his face is sweet and gentle as then it looked! He has come from heaven to fetch us."

"Alas, alas! but will our dying rescue our dear mother from the misery of purgatory? Holy, heavenly spirit, entreat the Lord to receive our beloved mother and ourselves."

Until then, stupefied by grief and half choked with tears, Gabriel had been unable to articulate a single word; but as the orphans uttered their touching prayer, he exclaimed:

"Cease, my children, to entertain fears for the eternal blessedness of your mother. Never did a more pure or saint-like spirit return to its Almighty Giver. How frequently have I heard my adopted parent speak of her rare virtues and noble character, rendering her so justly the pride and pattern of all who heard her name. Trust me, she has had her reward, and abundantly has her Heavenly Father blessed her for all her suffering so courageously supported while on this earth."

"Do you hear?" exclaimed Rose, while a bright flash

of joy momentarily illumined the livid features of both sisters. "Our mother is blessed and accepted in heaven!"

"Assuredly she is!" continued Gabriel; "but come, my poor children, dismiss these distressing ideas — try to rouse yourselves; you must not think of dying, remember your poor father's sufferings if he were to lose you!"

"Ah, yes, our father!" cried Blanche, with a sudden start; then in mingled words of reason and the wildest excitement that would have touched the hardest heart, she added, "Alas, alas! what will he do, when at his return he finds not his children? Father, dearest father, oh, forgive your poor girls; indeed, indeed, we did not think we were acting wrong, we wished to imitate your noble example, and to perform a devoted and generous action in coming hither to succour our poor Madame Augustine — our excellent, faithful *gouvernante*. And we little expected to die so soon and so suddenly; only yesterday we were so gay and happy!"

"Dear, good angel, will you not appear to our beloved father in a dream, as you did to us, and tell him that, when dying, our last thoughts — were — of — him? And that Dagobert knew nothing of our coming hither? — therefore beg our father not — to be — angry with him."

"Holy spirit," murmured the other dying girl, in a voice so feeble as to be scarcely articulate, "I entreat of you to go to Dagobert also — and tell him that on our death-bed — we ask his pardon — for the grief we know our death will — cause — him."

"And beg of our kind old friend," added Rose, trying to smile, "to pet our poor faithful dog Killjoy for us."

"And let me further beseech you, oh, good and pitying angel, to appear also to two persons we dearly love — and who have ever shown us so much kindness and affection. Carry the assurances of our love and gratitude — to that sweet Mlle. de Cardoville, and her good friend, La Mayeux. And when we are in heaven, we will watch over and bless all whom we have loved, and

who have loved us —" faintly articulated Blanche. "And now may God, in his great goodness — receive us to his presence — and permit us to rejoin — our beloved mother — never — again — to part from her."

"Ah, good archangel, you have promised us this — you remember in our dream you said, 'Poor children, who have journeyed from afar, you have traversed the earth, but to find everlasting rest with your departed and angelic mother!'"

"Oh, this is, indeed, dreadful!" exclaimed Gabriel, covering his agonised face with his hands; "thus to die — so young! so innocent! and no hope, no means of saving them. Almighty dispenser of all things, thy ways are, indeed, inscrutable! Alas, alas! why should these poor children be thus stricken by so cruel a death?"

Uttering a deep sigh, Rose made another strong effort for speech, while she indistinctly murmured:

"Let — us — be buried — together, — that — as in life we were never parted — so — in death — we may still be near — each other —"

And unable to articulate further, the sisters held their suppliant hands towards Gabriel, while their dying glances were fixed with beseeching earnestness on his countenance.

"Oh, ye martyrs of the purest and most generous devotion," cried the missionary, casting towards heaven his tear-fraught eyes, "ye angelic beings, treasures of candour and ingenuous innocence, ascend, ascend to those realms whither your Almighty Father summons, deeming, no doubt, this cold, bad world unworthy to possess you!"

"Sister! father!" were the last faint sounds that escaped the lips of the expiring sufferers. Then, as if by a last impulse, the sisters, by an instinctive movement, tried to fold their arms around each other, their heavy eyelids were partially raised, as if to enjoy one

parting look, a shivering seized their limbs, and then, as if exhausted by the paroxysm, they fell back motionless, while the last faint sigh issued from their half closed lips, now exhibiting all the pale lividness and violet tint of the frightful malady to which they had fallen victims.

And thus perished Rose and Blanche Simon.

After piously closing the eyelids of the poor orphans, Gabriel and Sister Martha reverentially knelt beside the bed, and offered up prayers for the repose of their souls.

Suddenly a loud and tumultuous noise was heard in the vast salon; and amid the heavy tramp of hurried steps, loud imprecations, and mournful cries, the curtain was hastily withdrawn from the bed of death, and Dagobert, pale, dishevelled, and distracted, broke in upon the solemn scene.

But at the sight which met his eyes, at the spectacle of his "children" thus extended, dead and motionless, with priest and sister of charity praying beside their insensible remains, the poor old soldier, petrified with horror, and struck to the heart with an agony too mighty for words, uttering a wild shriek of anguish, endeavoured to reach the bed, but in vain, and ere Gabriel, who had risen and was hastening towards him, could catch him in his arms, Dagobert had fallen backwards with fearful violence, his gray head striking heavily on the floor.

It is night — dark, gloomy, and stormy! One o'clock in the morning has just resounded from the church of Montmartre.

On the day preceding that night the remains of Rose and Blanche had been conveyed to the cemetery of Montmartre, both, according to their last desire, enclosed in one coffin.

Through the thick darkness which covered the field of death a pale, glimmering light was stealing stealthily along. It was the grave-digger! The man walked with more than his usual caution, picking his way by means

of a dark lanthorn; but this increase of precaution arose from his having a companion, who walked feebly and unsteadily, his figure enveloped in a large cloak, while the manner in which he held down his head, and the handkerchief repeatedly pressed to his eyes, told that he wept with a bitter and sincere grief that refused to be comforted.

This individual was Samuel, the aged Jew, and guardian of the house in the Rue St. François.

And so, also, had the old man come mysteriously to hold secret discourse with the digger of graves, and to obtain a great favour at his hands by means of a golden bribe, too weighty for refusal, on the night of the funeral obsequies of Jacques Rennepont, the first to die among the seven heirs to the disputed inheritance.

The favour sought and obtained was as singular as fearful.

After having traversed many of the thickly shaded cypress paths, densely studded with graves, the Jew and his conductor arrived at a small kind of open fence situated near the western wall of the cemetery. The night was so pitchy dark that nothing could be discerned beyond the small spot illumined by the faint rays of the lanthorn.

After moving his lanthorn about for some time, sometimes sweeping it along the damp ground, and occasionally holding it up, as though in search of some object to direct his search by, the grave-digger seemed to have found what he was searching for; and, showing to Samuel a large yew-tree, whose widely spreading branches extended far on all sides, he pointed to a newly raised mound of earth at its feet, saying, "That's it!"

"Are you quite sure?"

"Oh, yes! two bodies in the same coffin. That is a thing we don't often have here."

"Alas, alas!" sighed forth the old Jew, with a bitter groan, "both in one coffin, said you?"

"And now, then, since you know the spot," inquired the grave-digger, "what do you want further with me?"

Samuel replied not, but, falling on his knees, piously kissed the earth forming the new-made grave. Then rising, with tears streaming down his aged cheeks, he approached the grave-digger and whispered a few, very few words in his ear; but the whisper was so feeble, it scarcely reached him for whom it was intended, and yet the two individuals were alone in the darkness and solitude of the deserted cemetery. And so did these men pursue their discourse, while the dark veil of night covered them, and her silence dwelt around.

The grave-digger, as though terrified by Samuel's proposition, at first peremptorily refused the request made to him, whatever it was. But the Jew employing, alternately, persuasion, prayers, entreaties, tears, and even the temptation of gold, for its jingling could be distinctly heard, the grave-digger, after a long resistance, at length appeared vanquished; and although still involuntarily shuddering at the idea of what Samuel had proposed to him, he said, in an agitated voice:

"To-morrow night, then, about two o'clock —!"

"I will be behind this wall," said Samuel, displaying by the aid of the lanthorn the latticed fence, which was low; "and, by way of giving you notice of my being there, I will throw three stones into the cemetery."

"That will do," answered the grave-digger, shuddering, and wiping away the drops of cold sweat which trickled down his brow; "I shall recollect — three stones thrown over that low fence into the cemetery." And then, as if he had regained a portion of his youthful strength, Samuel, spite of his extreme age, managed, by the grave-digger's aid, and by availing himself of the inequalities in the formation of the stone wall, to climb over the lowest part of it, and disappear; while the grave-digger hastened homewards with all imaginable speed, occasionally glancing over his shoulder with a look of intense

horror, as though he fancied himself pursued by some supernatural being.

On the night that witnessed the funeral obsequies of Rose and Blanche, Rodin wrote the two following notes. The first, addressed to his mysterious correspondent at Rome, alluded to the death of Jacques Rennepont, with those of Rose and Blanche Simon, the inveiglement of M. Hardy, and the renunciation of all Gabriel's claims, thereby reducing the number of claimants to two, Mlle. de Cardoville and Djalma.

This first billet written by Rodin, and addressed to Rome, merely contained these words:

"Take five from seven there remain two. Communicate this result to the cardinal prince, and let him be active and stirring, for I am advancing on — on — on!"

While the second note, written in a feigned hand, was directed and sent by a safe and sure mode of communication to Maréchal Simon, whose hands it was certain to reach. It merely contained these words:

"If there be yet time, return with all speed, — your children are dead! Their murderer will be pointed out to you."

CHAPTER XXIII.

RUIN.

It was the day after the death of Maréchal Simon's daughters. Mlle. de Cardoville was still ignorant of the sad end of her young relatives; her features were radiant with happiness; never had she looked so lovely, — never did her eyes appear more brilliant, her complexion of a more dazzling whiteness, her lips of a more humid coral. According to her custom (eccentric it must be allowed) of dressing herself in a picturesque manner, Adrienne wore, although it was about three o'clock in the afternoon, a pale green gown, a very full petticoat, of which the sleeves and corsage were slashed with pink, and laced up with white of excessive delicacy. A light net of pearl concealed the thick roll of hair at the back of Adrienne's head, forming a kind of Oriental head-dress of delightful originality, and which suited admirably with the long curls of the young lady, which encircled her face, and fell almost as low as her finely rounded bosom.

To the expression of unutterable happiness which overspread the features of Mlle. de Cardoville was united a certain resolute, jesting, satirical air, which was not habitual to her. Her well-formed head seemed to be still more gracefully erect on her lovely white neck, and it seemed as though an ill-repressed ardour dilated her small, pink, and intelligent nostrils, and that she was awaiting with the utmost impatience the moment for an aggressive and ironical encounter.

Not far from Adrienne was La Mayeux, who had resumed in the house the situation she at first occupied. The young sempstress was in mourning for her sister; her countenance expressed a deep but softened sorrow. She looked at Mlle. de Cardoville with surprise, for she had never before seen the countenance of the young patrician express so much boldness and satire.

Mlle. de Cardoville had not the slightest coquetry, in the narrow and vulgar acceptation of the word, and yet she cast a glance at the mirror before which she was standing; then, after having restored its elastic curl to one of her locks of golden hair by rolling it around her ivory finger, she removed with her hand several imperceptible folds formed by the wrinkling of the thick material about her elegant corsage. This movement, and that which she made as she half turned her back to the glass to see if her gown was properly adjusted, revealed by a serpentine undulation all the elegance, all the graces of her figure, so delicate, well turned, and

"Small by degrees and beautifully less;"

for, in spite of the sculptural and full richness of her back and shoulders, as white, firm, and lustrous as Pentelic marble, Adrienne was also one of those who could make a girdle of her bracelet.

These delicious little womanish coquetries performed with indescribable grace, Adrienne, turning towards La Mayeux, whose surprise increased at every moment, said to her, with a smile:

"My gentle Madeleine, do not laugh at what I am going to say. What should you think of a tableau, which will represent me as you now see me?"

"Really, mademoiselle —"

"What! mademoiselle, still?" said Adrienne, in a tone of gentle reproach.

"But, Adrienne," continued La Mayeux, "I should

say it was a very charming tableau, and (as you always are) that you were dressed with exquisite taste."

"Then you do not find me any better to-day than on other days? Dear poetess, allow me to say that it is not on my own account that I ask this question," added Adrienne, gaily.

"I thought so," replied La Mayeux, with a gentle smile. "Well, then, in truth it is impossible to conceive a more becoming toilet. This gown, of apple-green and pale pink, heightened by the gentle brilliancy of the white ornaments, which harmonise so precisely with the hue of your hair, all combine, so that in my life I declare I never saw a more attractive tableau."

What La Mayeux said she felt, and was happy she could so express herself, for, as we have said, how deep was the admiration of this soul of poetry for all that was beautiful!

"Well," observed Adrienne, gaily, "I am delighted that you think me better to-day than any other day, my dear."

"Only —" continued La Mayeux, hesitating.

"Only?" said Adrienne, looking at the young work-girl with an interrogative air.

"Only, my dear," said La Mayeux, "if I have never seen you look more decidedly handsome, at the same time I never saw your features so expressive of resolute, satirical determination as at this moment. You have the air of impatient defiance."

"That is precisely what I desire, my dear little Madeleine," said Adrienne, throwing her arms around La Mayeux's neck with tender joy. "I must embrace you to show my delight at being so well understood, — for if I have, as you say so well, that provoking air, it is because I am expecting my dear aunt."

"Madame the Princesse de Saint-Dizier?" exclaimed La Mayeux, in a tone of fear; "that great lady who was so wicked, and behaved so shamefully to you?"

"Precisely so, my dear; she has requested an interview, and I shall be delighted to receive her."

"Delighted!"

"Delighted — rather an affected delight — a little satirical or so — a little in malice, perchance," replied Adrienne, gaily. "Only imagine, she regrets her flirtations, her beauty, her youth! Indeed, her very embonpoint distresses her, the dear, pious woman! And she hates to see me handsome, beloved, loving, and — thin; yes, above all things, thin," added Mlle. de Cardoville, laughing very heartily, and then adding, "you really cannot imagine, my dear, the hateful envy, the savage despair, which a stout, elderly female, of ridiculous pretensions, feels at the sight of a young, thin woman."

"My dear friend," said La Mayeux, seriously, "you jest, surely; and yet somehow, I don't know how, but the coming of the princess really alarms me."

"Dear, susceptible creature, be of good heart," replied Adrienne, affectionately; "this woman I do not fear any longer. In order to prove this to her, and at the same time to make her as wretched as possible, I mean to treat her, monster of hypocrisy as she is, all wickedness and infamy, — she who comes here, no doubt, with some abominable design, — I will treat her as if she were some inoffensive and ridiculous person; in a word, like a fat woman!" And again Adrienne laughed with all her might.

A *valet de chambre* entered, and, interrupting Adrienne's mirth, said to her:

"Madame la Princesse de Saint-Dizier begs to know if mademoiselle will receive her?"

"Certainly," said Mlle. de Cardoville.

The servant left the room.

La Mayeux was about to leave the apartment, when Adrienne retained her, taking her hand, and saying, in an accent of serious tenderness, "My dear, remain, I beg of you."

"You desire it?"

"Yes, I desire it for the sake of my vengeance," replied Adrienne, with a smile, "and to prove to Madame de Saint-Dizier that I have a tender friend; and, in fact, that I enjoy all earthly blisses at the same time."

"But, Adrienne," observed La Mayeux, "only reflect that—"

"Hush, my dear, here is the princess; remain—I ask it as a favour, as a personal service. Your wonderful instinct of heart will, perchance, detect the secret aim of her visit; the presentiments of your affection have already enlightened me as to the plots of that odious Rodin,—did they not?"

With such an entreaty, La Mayeux could not hesitate—she remained, but was going from the fireside, when Adrienne took her by the hand and made her sit down in the armchair she occupied by the hearth, saying to her:

"My dear Madeleine, keep your place, you owe nothing to Madame de Saint Dizier; it is different with me, for she comes to me as a visitor."

Adrienne had scarcely pronounced these words than the princess entered, with her head erect, her imposing air (and, as we have already said, she had one of the most imposing airs in the world), her step firm, and her demeanour haughty.

The most perfect characters, the most philosophical minds, yield almost always at some time to puerile weaknesses; a ferocious envy, excited by the beauty, the mind of Adrienne, had always had a great share in the hatred of the princess for her niece, although it was impossible to think of rivalry with Adrienne, and she never had seriously thought of such a thing. Madame de Saint-Dizier could not help, when she was coming to the interview she had requested, devoting a great deal of attention to her toilet, and of being laced, tied, and bound in to a triple extent in her shot-silk dress,—a

compression which rendered her countenance much more suffused than usual. In a word, the crowd of jealous and hateful sentiments which animated her against Adrienne had, at the mere thought of this meeting, excited so much perturbation in a mind usually calm and controlled, that, instead of a simple and plain toilet which, as a woman of tact and taste, she usually wore, the princess had the false *goût* to wear a gown *à la gorge de pigeon*, and a garnet-coloured bonnet, ornamented with a magnificent plume of the bird of paradise. Hatred, envy, pride of triumph (the devotee was thinking of the perfidious skill with which she had incited the daughters of Maréchal Simon to almost certain death), the execrable hope, so ill concealed, of succeeding in fresh plots, were all displayed in the countenance of the Princesse de Saint-Dizier when she entered her niece's hôtel.

Adrienne, without advancing a step to her aunt, yet rose very politely from the sofa on which she was sitting, made a half-curtsey full of grace and dignity, and then seated herself again, pointing out to the princess an arm-chair placed in front of the fireplace, one corner of which was occupied by La Mayeux, while she (Adrienne) was on the other side, saying:

"Pray, madame, be seated."

The princess turned very red, remained standing, and cast a regard of haughty and insolent surprise at La Mayeux, who, faithful to the desire of Adrienne, had bowed slightly when Madame de Saint-Dizier entered, without offering her her seat. The young sempstress had acted thus both from reflection and the voice of her conscience, which told her that the real superiority of position did not belong to this base, hypocritical, and wicked princess, but to herself, La Mayeux, so good, so devoted.

"Pray, madame, sit down," repeated Adrienne, in a soft tone, and pointing to the vacant seat.

"The conversation I have requested with you, mademoiselle," replied the princess, "must be secret."

"I have no secrets, madame, from my dearest friend; and you can, therefore, speak before mademoiselle."

"I know of old," retorted Madame de Saint-Dizier, with bitter irony, "that in all things you care very little for secrecy, and are very facile in the choice of what you call your friends. But you will permit me to act differently from you. If you have no secrets, mademoiselle, I have, and I do not make a confidante of the first comer;" and the devotee cast another contemptuous glance on La Mayeux.

Madeleine, hurt at the insolent tone of the princess, replied, gently and simply:

"I do not at present perceive, madame, any difference so very humiliating between the first and the last comer to the house of Mlle. de Cardoville."

"What! *she* talks?" said the princess, in a tone of proud and impertinent pity.

"At least, madame, *she* replies," retorted La Mayeux, in her soft tone.

"Do you comprehend that I wish to converse with you alone, mademoiselle?" said the devotee to her niece, impatiently.

"Excuse me, I do not comprehend you, madame," replied Adrienne, with an astonished air; "mademoiselle, who honours me with her friendship, will be so kind as to be present at this interview you have requested of me. I say she will kindly do so, because, doubtless, it will require all the concession of kind regard to be resigned to hear, for my sake, all the gracious, benevolent, charming things which I have no doubt you intend to communicate to me."

"But, mademoiselle —" said the princess, quickly.

"Permit me to interrupt you, madame," said Adrienne, in a tone of amenity, and as if she were addressing to the devotee the most flattering compliments. "In order

to place you on terms of perfect confidence with mademoiselle, allow me to inform you that she is fully aware of all the pious perfidies, the holy infamies, the religious indignities, of which you were anxious, but failed, to make me the victim. She knows, too, that you are a mother of the church, such as there are very few; may I then hope, madame, that now your delicate and interesting reserve will cease?"

"Really," replied the princess, with angry amaze, "I do not know whether I am asleep or awake!"

"Ah, indeed!" said Adrienne, in a tone of alarm; "the doubt you display as to the state of your faculties is very alarming, madame. Your blood mounts into your head, no doubt, for your face is very much flushed; you seem oppressed — compressed — depressed; perhaps (we may say so amongst women), perhaps you are laced a little too tight, madame?"

These words, uttered by Adrienne with all the affectionate seeming of interest and simplicity, all but choked the princess, who, in spite of herself, became crimson, and cried out, as she suddenly seated herself:

"Well, thus be it so, mademoiselle; I prefer such a reception to any other — it puts me at my ease — as you say —"

"Does it not, madame?" added Adrienne, with a smile; "at least we can frankly say all we have on our minds — which must at least have for you the charm of novelty. Come now, between ourselves, own that you feel much obliged to me for having thus put you in a position to throw aside, if for a moment only, that odious mask of devotion, mildness, and benignity, which must weigh on you so heavily."

When she thus heard the sarcasms of Adrienne (an innocent and excusable revenge, if we reflect on all the ill which the princess had done, or desired to do, to her niece), La Mayeux felt her heart pierced, for she (and with reason) dreaded, more than

did Adrienne, the princess, who replied with much *sang-froid:*

"A thousand thanks, mademoiselle, for your kind intentions and your feelings towards me; I appreciate them as they deserve, and as I ought, and I trust, without keeping you in expectation, to prove it to you."

"Yes, yes, madame," replied Adrienne, with earnestness, "tell us all about it — I am so impatient — so curious —"

"And yet," said the princess, feigning in her turn an ironical and bitter concern, "you are a thousand leagues off from guessing what I am about to tell you."

"Really? Indeed, madame, I feel that your candour, your modesty, are in your way," retorted Adrienne, with the same biting affability; "for there are very few things you can do or say that would surprise me, madame. Do you not know that from you I expect every and anything?"

"Perhaps, mademoiselle," said the devotee, pronouncing her words very slowly; "if, for instance, I told you that in four and twenty hours — by to-morrow, say — you were reduced to actual want."

This was so unexpected that Mlle. de Cardoville made a gesture of surprise, and La Mayeux shuddered.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" said the princess, with triumphant joy, and in a tone that was affectionately cruel, as she saw the increasing surprise of her niece. "Come, confess that I do surprise you, although, as you said, very few things on my part could astonish you. How right you were to have given to our conversation the tone you did, else I should have required all sorts of apologies and introductions before I could have said to you, 'Mademoiselle, to-morrow you will be as poor as you are rich to-day,' whilst now I can say this quite easily, quite simply."

Her first surprise over, Adrienne replied, smiling, with a calmness which amazed the devotee:

"Well, I confess frankly, madame, that I have been surprised; for I expected from you one of those base infamies in which you excel, — some perfidy well plotted and most cruel. But how could I suppose that you would make so much ceremony for such a trifle?"

"To be ruined — completely ruined!" exclaimed the devotee; "ruined by this time to-morrow; you, so daringly prodigal, to see not only your income, but this hôtel, your furniture, horses, jewels, — all, everything, even to those absurd costumes of which you are so vain, — sequestrated! Do you call that a trifle? You, who squander with indifference thousands of louis, to see yourself reduced to a mere humble allowance, less than the wages you give to one of your women! Do you call that a trifle?"

To the intense disappointment of her aunt, Adrienne, who appeared more and more tranquillised, was about to reply to her aunt, when the door opened, and, without being announced, Djalma entered.

An engrossing and proud tenderness overspread the radiant brow of Adrienne at the sight of the prince; and it is impossible to depict the look of triumphant and haughty happiness which she turned on Madame de Saint-Dizier.

Never had Djalma appeared more decidedly handsome; never had more perfect bliss displayed itself in a human countenance. The Indian wore a long robe of white cashmere with a thousand stripes of purple and gold; his turban was the same colour and material, and a magnificent flowered shawl was fastened around his waist.

At the sight of the Indian, whom she had not hoped to meet at Mlle. de Cardoville's, the Princesse de Saint-Dizier could not at first conceal her great astonishment. There, then, were Madame de Saint-Dizier, Adrienne, La Mayeux, and Djalma present at the following scene.

CHAPTER XXIV.

RECOLLECTIONS.

DJALMA, never having seen Madame de Saint-Dizier before at Adrienne's, had appeared at first very much surprised at her presence. The princess, silent for a moment, contemplated in turns, with deep hatred and implacable envy, those two beings so handsome, so young, so loving, so happy; and then she shuddered suddenly, as if a souvenir of great importance presented itself suddenly to her mind, and for several seconds she remained deeply absorbed in thought.

Adrienne and Djalma profited by this pause to gaze on each other with an ardent idolatry which filled their eyes with a humid flame, and then, on a movement of Madame de Saint-Dizier, who appeared to have shaken off her momentary reverie, mademoiselle said to the young Indian, with a smile:

"My dear cousin, I wish to repair a forgetfulness, I confess a voluntary one (you shall learn why), by speaking to you, for the first time, of one of my relatives, to whom I have the honour of presenting you, — Madame the Princesse de Saint-Dizier."

Djalma bowed.

Mlle. de Cardoville continued rapidly, at the moment when her aunt was about to reply:

"Madame de Saint-Dizier came here to communicate most graciously an event the most fortunate for me, and of which I will presently inform you, my dear cousin, unless this good princess is desirous of anticipating me in the pleasure of doing so."

The unexpected arrival of Djalma, the recollections which suddenly occurred to the princess, no doubt greatly modified her first plans; for, instead of continuing the conversation as to Adrienne's ruined fortunes, Madame de Saint-Dizier replied, with a smiling air which concealed some evil design:

"I should be miserable, prince, to deprive my amiable and dear niece of the pleasure of announcing to you presently the good news to which she alludes, and of which, as a loving kinswoman, I hastened to inform her. Here are a few notes on the subject (and the princess handed a paper to Adrienne), which I hope will prove satisfactorily the reality of what I have announced to her."

"A thousand thanks, my dearest aunt," said Adrienne, taking the paper with the utmost indifference; "this precaution, this proof, were superfluous. You know I can always take your word, when it is in reference to any good-will towards me."

In spite of his ignorance of the refined treacheries, the smooth cruelties, of civilisation, Djalma was endowed with that exquisite tact which is a part of all uncultivated and easily excited natures, and he felt a kind of moral disquietude when he listened to this exchange of affected amenities. He did not penetrate their inverted sense, but yet they sounded as it were false in his ears; and, either from instinct or presentiment, he experienced a powerful prejudice against Madame de Saint-Dizier.

The devotee, reflecting on the seriousness of the incident she was about to bring forward, could scarcely contain her internal agitation, which was evidenced by the increasing suffusion of her cheeks, her bitter smile, and the wicked joy in her eye; and then, at the sight of this woman, Djalma could not overcome an increasing antipathy, and remained silent, attentive, and his handsome features even lost their original serenity.

La Mayeux also experienced a sort of increasing un-

easiness, while she continued alternately to gaze with fearful, timid glances on the princess, or supplicatingly towards Adrienne, as though imploring of her to cease a conversation from which the young needlewoman foresaw the most painful results.

But, unfortunately, Madame de Saint-Dizier had then too much interest in prolonging the interview, while Mlle. de Cardoville, deriving firm courage, and animated by still greater energy and confidence by the presence of the man she adored, seemed to revel in the dear delight of torturing her false, treacherous aunt by the sight of an affection which had resisted all the arts of herself and her accomplices to overthrow.

After a momentary silence, Madame de Saint-Dizier resumed, in a soft, insinuating tone of voice:

"My dear prince, you can scarcely imagine how delighted I was to learn by public report (for I assure you nothing else is talked of), — I say, how excessively gratified I felt upon hearing of your intense adoration of my dear niece here; for, really, without being aware of it, you have relieved me from a very awkward dilemma!"

Djalma's only answer was to regard Mlle. de Cardoville with a look at once surprised and sad, as though he thus mutely questioned her as to what her aunt could possibly mean.

Fully comprehending the appeal, Madame de Saint-Dizier replied to it, by saying:

"I will be more explicit, since I perceive you do not fully comprehend my last observation. But, to come to the point, you perceive that, as the nearest relation to this dear, giddy girl," looking towards Adrienne, "I was more or less responsible for her conduct in the eyes of the world; and behold, just as my difficulties with regard to my niece had reached their height, you, prince, most opportunely arrive to my assistance from the uttermost parts of the globe, boldly and courageously to take

upon yourself a charge which so infinitely puzzled and embarrassed me. Oh, really, your conduct is most charming, and, as far as myself and niece are concerned, most exemplary, — leaving the astonished world at a loss which to admire most, your courage or your simplicity."

Having thus spoken, the princess cast a glance of almost fiendish malice towards Adrienne, and with an air of deadly defiance seemed to await her reply.

"Pray pay particular attention to my good aunt, dear cousin!" answered Mlle. de Cardoville, with a calm and smiling manner. "From the instant that our affectionate relative became a witness of our mutual happiness, and found us, instead of being wretched, as our enemies would have had us, full of trust and confidence in each other, her heart overflowed with delight; and you have yet to know in what manner my good aunt relieves the overfullness of her tender feelings. But have a little patience, and you will be able to judge for yourself." Then, with the most natural air imaginable, Adrienne continued, "I know not how it is, dear cousin; but talking of the outpourings of my aunt's affectionate heart reminds me (without, certainly, there being the slightest connection between the two subjects) of what you were relating to me — you know, cousin — concerning a species of viper found in your country; how, in vainly attempting to bite, they break the teeth used in filtering the venom they inject into their victims, so that they are compelled to swallow their own deadly poison, and consequently perish by the very means intended for the destruction of others. Now, dear aunt, I am quite sure that your kind, sympathising nature will pity and compassionate these poor, disappointed, and baffled vipers!"

Casting a look of implacable hatred on her niece, Madame de Saint-Dizier replied, in a tone of ill-restrained agitation:

"I confess I do not precisely understand either the moral or the application of your 'fact in natural history,'

— for such, I presume, you desire it to be considered. May I inquire your opinion, prince?"

But Djalma answered not. Leaning on the chimney-piece, he continued sternly and searchingly to gaze on the features of the princess, while his mind seemed each moment to feel an increase of aversion and disgust for her.

"Dearest aunt!" exclaimed Adrienne, in a voice of feigned though gentle reproach, "have I then presumed too far on your kind and pitying nature? Is it possible you have no sympathy with or compassion for the unfortunate vipers? Alas, alas! for whom or for what, then, can your commiseration be excited? But, to be sure," added Adrienne, as though merely uttering her thoughts aloud, "they are too insignificant, too contemptible, to excite the notice of one who always flies at high and noble game." Then, perceiving the almost uncontrollable fury of her aunt, Adrienne gaily cried, "But let us not waste our precious time any more than our sympathies upon objects so undeserving to engross them; but I beseech of you at once, dear, kind aunt, to favour us with the many tender speeches I doubt not the sight of my cousin's and my own happiness has inspired a mind like yours!"

"Why, then, my beloved and amiable niece, since you so much desire it, I will speak with the candour you desire; first, congratulating this dear, kind, young man for having ventured hither, even from the wilds of India, to take the charge of you off my hands; and with a blind confidence above all praise has the worthy nabob relieved me of the stern necessity of controlling your actions, and even, poor, giddy girl! from being compelled to having recourse to such measures as passing you off in the world as having thoroughly lost your senses, as confining you as a confirmed lunatic in a private madhouse, — not that you were mad, but because it was absolutely necessary to gloss over your irregularities and

excesses under the mask of lunacy. You cannot have forgotten that you positively went such fearful lengths as to have men privately concealed in your sleeping apartment; and that upon one occasion we were publicly and openly scandalised by the police even finding a young man hid in your chamber. Upon that occasion, you know, we were obliged to call in the friendly coöperation of our worthy friend, Doctor Baleinier; and it was only by his noble and generous conduct in immediately conducting you to one of his asylums, and keeping you there a sufficient time, that the offended world learned to pity instead of despise you, believing, from the report I so industriously circulated, that you were afflicted with a flighty madness that rendered unfair to question your conduct or criticise your actions. Let's see, what was the name of the man dragged out of the recess where you had hidden him? Come, help me to recollect it; you can, if you like, I know. Ah, he was a very handsome young fellow, and, moreover, a great writer of poetry. He was called Agricol — Baudoin! Now I have it, though, you little, faithless, capricious thing, you pretend to have forgotten all about him. Ah, my dear prince, if you seek notoriety, you could not possibly go a more certain way to obtain it than by espousing this young lady; for never was a name or a person more the subject of general conversation than my niece has made herself."

And at these words, as hateful as unlooked for, Adrienne, Djalma, and La Mayeux, all remained mute and motionless, under their different feelings of resentment. The princess seeing no further occasion for concealing her fiendish joy and triumphant hatred, exclaimed, with flushed features and sparkling eyes, as she arose and addressed herself to Adrienne, in a loud, exulting voice:

"Yes, 'tis true every word I have uttered, and I dare you, mademoiselle, to contradict a syllable I have ad-

vanced! Was there, or was there not, a low, working man, a mere common artisan, found by the police in your bedchamber, leaving but one conclusion to be drawn, that he was at that time your favoured lover?"

At this vile accusation, the bright transparency of Djalma's amber complexion became suddenly livid and almost leaden in its hue; his large, fixed, and dilated eyes became encircled with white; his upper lip, red as blood itself, became rigidly drawn up, so as to display the convulsive clenching of his pearly teeth. In a word, the whole expression of his countenance became in a moment so fearfully threatening and savage that La Mayeux shuddered as she beheld it.

Carried away by his impetuous and overboiling rage, the young Indian experienced the same paroxysm of unreflecting rage, the same maddening whirlwind of fury, as causes the blood to rush with boiling eagerness to the brain of the man of unsullied honour and undaunted courage when some dastardly assailant strikes him the purposely dealt blow to provoke him. And if, during this terrible moment, rapid in its duration as the lightning which cleaves the sky, action had succeeded to thought in the mind of Djalma, all present would have perished by an explosion as frightful and sudden as that caused by the springing of a mine beneath our feet.

Djalma would have destroyed the princess, because she accused Adrienne of a vile act of treachery and wrong; Adrienne herself, because she had even been the object of a suspicion; La Mayeux, for having witnessed the accusation; while his own life would have been sacrificed as useless after being so basely and treacherously deceived. But, oh, prodigy! his wrathful, bloodshot, infuriated look no sooner encountered the mild, calm, dignified glances of Adrienne, impressed with all the serene confidence of conscious virtue and innocence, than the ferocious anger of the young man disappeared as instantaneously as it had manifested

itself. And even more than this, to the profound astonishment of the princess and La Mayeux, in proportion as the looks of Djalma were more and more riveted on Adrienne, as they became, in a manner, more penetrating and influenced by increased reason and intelligence, so did the countenance of the young Indian become, as it were, utterly changed, and the so lately convulsed and threatening features of Djalma became sweet and gentle, and reflected, as it were on a mirror, the peace and security which had returned to his heart from the close contemplation of a soul as pure and spotless as that which irradiated the lovely face of Adrienne. Let us endeavour to give some natural explanation of a moral change so delightful to La Mayeux, so full of discomfiture for the princess.

Scarcely had the venomous lips of Madame de Saint-Dizier distilled their poison into the ears of the young Indian than he quitted his reclining position by the chimneypiece, and, in the first burst of his fury, advanced towards the princess; then, as if desirous of restraining the violence of his fury, he grasped the marble as though he would reduce it to atoms, a convulsive agitation shook his frame, while his features were rendered scarcely recognisable by the distortions of passion and unbridled rage.

On her side, when Adrienne heard the vile charge made by her aunt, she too, yielding to the first impulse of irritated and outraged feelings, had partly arisen from her chair with flashing eyes and looks that threatened annihilation, but, comforted and immediately strengthened and assured by the consciousness of her own purity, her lovely face quickly resumed its usual expression of sweetness and tenderness, and it was precisely then her eyes encountered those of Djalma; and for an instant the feelings produced in the mind of Adrienne were rather those of sorrow than of anger; but as she again considered the menacing and fearful expression of

Djalma's physiognomy, she said, mentally, "Can a gross and vulgar-minded insult like the present thus excite him? Surely he must himself suspect my innocence!" But to this idea, as cruel as it was short-lived, succeeded the most ecstatic joy when the eyes of Adrienne, long and steadily fixed on those of the Indian, saw, as if by magic, the ferocious expression of those features soften into a look of adoring love and confidence, as radiant with happiness as they had erewhile been threatening.

And thus did the fiendish design of Madame de Saint-Dizier fall harmlessly to the ground before the noble, dignified look of sincere and confiding love visible on the countenance of her she sought to traduce. Nor was this all. At the very moment when a witness to this expressive scene, so marvellously evincing the wonderful sympathy existing between these two beings, who without even a word, and by a mere exchange of looks, had comprehended all, explained all, and become perfectly reassured, the princess was almost suffocating with rage, Adrienne, with a bewitching smile and a playfulness of manner wholly irresistible, extended her beautiful hand to Djalma, who, kneeling before her, imprinted on it a kiss so ardent and energetic as brought the bright, carnation blush of maiden modesty, mingled with the purest happiness, to the cheek of the fair girl before him.

The Indian then placing himself on the ermine rug at Madame de Cardoville's feet, in an attitude full of grace and respect, leaned his chin on the palm of one of his hands, and in mute adoration contemplated Adrienne silently, as leaning towards him, smiling and happy, she gazed, as the song goes, "in his eyes of eyes," with as much enthralling love as if the devotee, choking with hate, had not been there.

Adrienne soon, as if something were wanting to her bliss, beckoned to La Mayeux and made her sit beside her, and then, with a hand clasped in that of her excel-

lent friend, Mlle. de Cardoville smiled at Djalma adoring at her feet, and then cast a look on the princess, who was more and more in amaze, so sweet, firm, and calm, as depicted most nobly the invincible quietude of her happiness and the immeasurable height of her contempt for calumny, that Madame de Saint-Dizier, overwhelmed, overcome, stammered out several scarcely intelligible words in a voice that shook with anger, and then, completely losing all self-command, rushed hastily towards the door.

But at that moment La Mayeux, who feared some plot, some treachery, or perfidious espionage, resolved, after having exchanged a glance with Adrienne, to follow the princess to her carriage.

The angry disappointment of Madame de Saint-Dizier, when she saw herself thus accompanied and watched by La Mayeux, appeared to Mlle. de Cardoville so comic that she could not refrain from bursting into loud laughter; and at the sound of this contemptuous mirth the devotee, choked with rage and despair, quitted the house on which she had hoped to bring trouble and misfortune.

Adrienne and Djalma were left alone.

Before we continue the scene which passed between them, a few retrospective words are requisite.

It will be easily believed, that from the moment when Mlle. de Cardoville and the Indian had been brought more closely into communion, after so many crosses, their days glided on in unutterable happiness. Adrienne occupied herself particularly in bringing forth, one by one as it were, all the generous qualities of Djalma, of which she had read such glowing details in the books of travellers.

The young girl had undertaken this tender and patient study of Djalma's character, not only in order to justify the intense love she felt, but also because this trial, to which she had assigned a time, might aid her in tempering the excess of Djalma's love, a task the more meri-

torious for Adrienne, as she herself experienced the same passionate sentiments. With these two beings, so perfectly endowed by the Creator, the passions and the dreams of the soul formed an equilibrium and maintained their mutual spring marvellously, God having endowed these two lovers with exceeding beauty of person and admirable beauty of heart, as if to render legitimate the irresistible attraction which drew them to each other.

What was to be the term of this trial which Adrienne imposed on Djalma and herself was what Mlle. de Cardoville intended to tell Djalma in this interview, after the sudden departure of Madame de Saint-Dizier.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE TRIAL.

MLLE. DE CARDOVILLE and Djalma remained alone.

Such was the perfect confidence which had succeeded in the Indian's mind to his first movement of ungovernable rage when he heard the infamous calumny of Madame de Saint-Dizier, that when alone with Adrienne he did not say one word in reference to this unworthy accusation.

On her side the young lady was too proud, and had too much consciousness of the purity of her love, to condescend to any explanation with Djalma. She would have thought it alike offensive to him and to herself.

The two lovers then began their conversation as if the incident referred to by the devotee had never occurred.

The same disdain was extended to the notes which, according to the princess, were to prove the impending ruin of Adrienne. The young lady had placed the paper on a small table near her without reading it. With a gesture filled with grace, she made a motion to Djalma to sit beside her, which he obeyed, quitting not without regret the place he had occupied at the young lady's feet.

"My friend," said Adrienne to him, in a soft and serious tone, "you have often and impatiently asked me when the termination of the trial which we have imposed on each other would arrive; it has nearly arrived now."

Djalma started, unable to repress a slight cry of happiness and surprise, but this exclamation, almost tremblingly uttered, was so sweet, so gentle, that it seemed

rather the first sound of unutterable gratitude than the passionate utterance of happiness.

Adrienne continued:

"Separated, surrounded by snares and falsehoods, mutually deceived as to our sentiments, yet still we loved each other; in this we followed an irresistible and sure attraction stronger than opposing events, but afterwards during the past days in the long retreat, during which we have lived isolated from all and of all, we have learned to esteem and honour each other the more. Given up to ourselves — free both of us — we have had the courage to resist all the burning impulses of passion in order that we might hereafter give ourselves to it without remorse. During these days our hearts have been open to each other, and we have therein read all — all. Thus, Djalma, I believe in you, and you believe in me; I find in you what you find in me — do you not? — every possible, desirable, and human guarantee for our happiness. But to our love there is wanting a consecration, and in the eyes of the world in which we are called to live there is but one only, — marriage, and that binds for the whole of life."

Djalma looked at the young girl with surprise.

"Yes, an entire lifetime; and yet, who can answer for ever to the sentiments of all their life?" continued the young girl; "a God who knows the future of all hearts alone can irrevocably bind certain beings — for their happiness; but, alas! to the eyes of human creatures, the future is impenetrable. Thus when we are unable to answer safely for more than the sincerity of a present sentiment, is it not to commit a mad, selfish, and impious action to take upon us bonds that are indissoluble?"

"It is sad to think so," said Djalma, after a moment's reflection, "but it is true," and he looked at the young lady with an expression of increasing surprise.

Adrienne continued, in a tone of considerable emotion:

"Do not mistake my thought, my dear friend; the love of two beings, who, like us, after a thousand trials of the heart and soul and mind, have found in each other all the assurances of desirable happiness, — a love like ours, — is indeed so noble, so great, so divine, that it cannot be without divine consecration. I have not the religion of the mass like my venerable aunt; but I have the religion of God; from him our love has emanated. He should be piously glorified for it, and it is therefore by invoking him with profoundest gratitude that we ought not to swear to love each other for ever, — not to belong to each other for ever."

"What mean you?" cried Djalma.

"No," continued Adrienne, "for no person can utter such an oath without falsehood or madness; but we may, in the sincerity of our soul, swear to do both of us loyally all that is humanly possible in order that our love may last perpetually, and that we may be for ever united. We ought not to take upon us these indissoluble bonds; for if we always love, of what use are these chains? If our love ceases, of what use are these chains, which are therefore but intolerable tyranny? I ask you this, my dear friend."

Djalma only replied by a gesture of respect, which showed his wish that Adrienne should continue.

"And then," she resumed with a mixture of tenderness and pride, "from respect for your dignity and my own, my dear friend, I will never take an oath to observe the law made by man against woman with haughty and brutal egotism, a law which seems to deny the soul, the heart, and mind of woman, a law with which she cannot comply without being enslaved or perjured, a law which as a maiden deprives her of her name; as a wife, declares her in a state of insensible imbecility, as it imposes on her a degrading state of tutelage; as a mother, refuses her every right and power over her children; and, finally, as a human creature, renders her

subservient, places fetters for ever on her at the good pleasure of another human creature, her equal and the same before God! You know, my dear friend," added the young girl, with impassioned excitement, "you know how much I honour you — you whose father was called the Father of the Generous; and I do not therefore fear that your noble and generous heart would ever exercise these tyrannical rights against me; but in my life I never told a lie, and our love is too holy, too celestial, to be submitted to a consecration bought by twofold perjury, — no, I never will take an oath to observe a law which my dignity and my reason revolt at. Soon the rights of women will be reëstablished; soon divorce will be law; and I will observe these usages because they accord with my own feelings, my own heart, with what is just, what is possible, what is human." Then interrupting herself, Adrienne added, with emotion so deep, so gentle, that a tear glistened in her lovely eyes, "Oh, if you knew, my friend, what your love is to me; if you knew how precious, how sacred to me is your happiness, you would excuse, you would comprehend these generous superstitions of a loving and loyal heart, which would see a sad presage in a lying and perjured consecration. What I wish is to fix and retain you by attraction, to enchain you by happiness and leave you free, to be indebted for you to yourself alone."

Djalma had listened to the young girl with fixed and passionate attention. Proud and noble-minded, he idolised her proud and noble disposition. After a moment's reflective silence he said, in his sweet and sonorous voice, and in a tone that was almost solemn:

"Like you, lying, perjury, and iniquity revolt me; like you, I think that a man degrades himself in accepting the right to be tyrannical and cowardly, however resolved he may be not to use this right; like you, it would be impossible for me to think that it was not to your heart only, but to the eternal constraint of an

indissoluble union, that I owed all that I would only have from yourself alone; like you, I think there is no true dignity but in perfect freedom. But you have said that you desire a divine consecration to love so great, so holy, and if you reject oaths that you could not take without madness, perjury, there are others which your reason — your heart — could and would accept. Who, then, shall give us this divine consecration? Before whom shall we pronounce these oaths?"

"In a very few days, my friend, I think I can, I believe I shall be able to tell you. Every evening after your departure, I had no other thought but this: to find some means of plighting ourselves, you and myself, in the eyes of God, but irrespective of the laws and in those limits only which reason approves, without offence to all that is required by the habits of the world in which it may hereafter suit us to live, and whose apparent susceptibilities must not be wounded. Yes, my dear friend, when you shall know in what noble hands I shall confide the office of uniting us, who it is that will thank and glorify God for this union, — a sacred union which will still leave us free that it may leave us worthy, — you will say, as I do, I am sure, that never were purer hands than will be laid on us. Excuse me, my dear friend, all this is very serious, as serious as our happiness, as serious as our love. If my words seem to you strange, my ideas unreasonable, say, oh, say it, my friend, and we will seek and find a better mode of reconciling what we owe to God, what we owe to the world, with what we owe to ourselves. They say that lovers are always mad," added the young lady, with a smile, "whilst I say there are none more sensible than real lovers."

"When I hear you speak thus of our happiness," said Djalma, with deep emotion, "and speak with that serious and calm tenderness, it appears as if I saw before me a mother incessantly occupied with the future of her adored child, endeavouring to surround it with everything that

can make it courageous, strong, and noble-hearted, trying to turn from its path all that is base and unworthy. You ask me to contradict you, Adrienne, if your ideas seem strange to me. But you forget, then, that that which makes my faith, my confidence in our love, is, that I experience it with the same views as yourself. What offends you offends me, what revolts you revolts me; and when but now you quoted to me the laws of this country, which in a woman respects not even a mother, I thought with pride that in our barbarous countries, where a woman is a slave, at least she is free when she becomes a mother, — no, no, these laws were not made for you or for me. Does it not prove the holy respect which you bear to our love that you desire to elevate it above all those unworthy servilities which would thus stain it? And, Adrienne, I must tell you that I have often heard the priests in my country say that there were beings inferior to the divinities, but superior to other creatures. I did not believe these priests then — here I believe them!"

These last words were pronounced, not with an accent of flattery, but in a tone of the most sincere conviction; with that sort of passionate veneration, of almost timorous fervour, which characterise the believer, when he speaks of his belief. But what is impossible to render is the undescribable harmony of these almost pious words, and the soft and serious tone of the young Indian's voice. It is impossible to paint the expression of loving and intense melancholy which gave an irresistible charm to his handsome features.

Adrienne had listened to Djalma with an indescribable mixture of joy, gratitude, and pride. Then laying her hands upon her heart, as if to repress its violent pulsation, she said, looking at the prince with deep affection:

"Yes, yes, always good, always just, always great! Oh, my heart, my heart, how it beats, proud and re-

joicingly! Be blessed, O *mon Dieu*, for having created me for this adored lover! Ah, the extent of happy, ardent, and free love is not yet known! Oh, thanks to us two, Djalma, the day on which our hands are united, what hymns of happiness and gratitude will mount to heaven!"

As she spoke thus, Adrienne (in Djalma's dazzled eyes) became more and more an ideal being, as, yielding to the force of her love, she cast on him her radiant glances.

Then, overcome by the intensity of his own passion, the Indian, throwing himself at the feet of his mistress, exclaimed:

"Oh, do not speak to me thus! What years of my life would I not give to hasten the day of happiness!"

"Nay, nay, not years, — they belong to me!"

"Adrienne, dost thou love me?"

The lovely girl made no reply, but her look spoke for her; and Djalma, taking both her hands in his, exclaimed in impassioned accents:

"To-day — this happy day — why delay it?"

"Because our love, in order to have no reserve, ought to be consecrated by the benediction of God!"

"Are we not free?"

"Yes, yes, beloved, we are free; but let us prove worthy of our liberty."

"Adrienne, have pity!"

"And I ask pity of you; yes, pity for the sanctity of our love. Do not profane it in the flower — that would be to see it soon wither! Courage, my friend, for yet some days, and heaven — without remorse, without regrets —"

"But until then hell — nameless tortures — for you do not know, no, you do not know, when, after each day I quit this house, that your recollection follows me, surrounds, burns me! It seems as though it were your

breath that inflames me and destroys my sleep, — and each night I sob and call for you, as I did when I believed you did not love me — and yet I know now that you are mine, that you really love me! But to see you — to see you each day more beautiful, more adorable, and yet each day to leave you more deeply enslaved, adoring — you do not know — "

Djalma could not proceed. Adrienne had also experienced "the charming agonies of love," and perhaps more acutely than Djalma, and she felt now all the strength and all the weakness of passion. But with an effort she suddenly quitted her seat, and went towards the apartment in which La Mayeux usually remained, calling for her as she proceeded.

A second had scarcely elapsed ere Mlle. de Cardoville, in tears and most unutterably lovely, clasped La Mayeux in her arms, whilst Djalma knelt at the threshold of the door, which he did not, from respect, venture to cross.

CHAPTER XXVI.

AMBITION.

A VERY few days had elapsed since the interview lately recorded between Djalma and Adrienne, and Rodin was alone in the same apartment in the Rue Vangirard that had witnessed his firm endurance of the severe remedies applied by Doctor Baleinier; his hands were plunged into the recesses of the back pockets of his old great-coat, while, with head bent forwards on his breast, the Jesuit was evidently buried in profound thought, the alternations of his step from slow to rapid pacing of the floor alone indicating the agitation of his mind.

"As regards Rome," muttered Rodin to himself, "I feel quite easy, everything is progressing as I could wish. The abdication is in a manner agreed upon, and, if I can only pay the price demanded, the cardinal prince promises me a majority of nine voices at the approaching conclave. Our general is on my side. The doubts entertained respecting my sincerity by Cardinal Malipieri have either died away of themselves or have found no support in Rome. Still I am not wholly without uneasiness touching the correspondence Father d'Aigrigny is said to hold with Malipieri. I have been unable to discover anything certain respecting it. No matter, this old soldier is a condemned man, his affairs are drawing to a crisis; a little patience and he will be — executed!"

And here the livid lips of Rodin were distorted by one of those fiendish laughs that gave to his whole countenance an almost diabolical expression. After a pause he resumed:

"The funeral obsequies of that freethinker and philanthropic friend to mankind in general, and the working classes in particular, took place at St. Herem the day before yesterday. François Hardy ceased to live while revelling in the delight of one of his absurd fits of crazy enthusiasm called religious ecstasy! I had his formal deed of gift before; but this event makes the thing irrevocable. Living men sometimes recall their bequests — the dead never do."

For a few seconds Rodin remained silent and reflective, then said, with pointed energy:

"There remain, then, only this red-haired girl and her lovesick mulatto. To-day is the twenty-seventh of May. The first of June is close at hand, and as yet this pair of loving fools have resisted all my endeavours to bring them to my wishes. The princess imagined she had hit upon such a clever idea, and certainly I was of her opinion; it seemed such a sure stroke to recall the finding of Agricola Baudoin in the chamber of her crack-brained niece. And at first the Indian tiger roared with savage jealousy; but scarcely had the loving turtle-dove cooed out a repetition of her fond notes than the weak and imbecile savage came crouching to her feet, drawing back the claws previously sharpened by a well-aimed appeal to his violent and vindictive feelings. 'Tis a pity — quite a pity! Something ought to have come of that."

And again Rodin resumed his rapid pacing the floor.

"Nothing is more surprising," said he, "than the singular production of one idea from another! How strange that my applying the simile of a turtle-dove to this red-haired wench should have brought back to my mind the recollection of that infamous old woman called Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, who was courted and followed by that fat fool, Jacques Dumoulin; but whom, I trust, will be carried off by the Abbé Corbinet, for our benefit and advantage. I want to know how comes

it that the employment of a single term brings this hideous old hag back to my thoughts? I have often observed, that in the same manner as a rhymester is indebted to the most singular chances for some of his best rhymes, so the beginning of our most brilliant ideas may frequently be traced to some association as absurd as that which has just occurred to me; as ridiculous as the very thought of bringing together the images of an old witch like La Sainte-Colombe and a young beauty such as Adrienne de Cardoville. The two suit each other about as well as a ring would a cat, or a necklace adorn a fish. Well, well, I must try what my brain can produce out of these jumbled notions."

Scarcely had these words escaped the lips of Rodin than he started and a malignant joy gleamed over his hideous features, which was succeeded by a sort of meditative surprise, such as the philosopher or the student might be supposed to experience when astonished and delighted by some unexpected discovery; and with head erect, expanded gaze, sparkling eye, his hollow, flaccid cheeks distended by a sort of proud and exulting feeling, Rodin stood; his tall, gaunt figure drawn up to its utmost height, his arms folded, as with an air of indescribable triumph, he exclaimed:

"Surely the workings of the mind are wonderful — admirable; far beyond our poor powers to comprehend them! Oh, the inexplicable links which unite the chain of human reasoning! To think that from a mere word or term of derisive reproach should emanate an idea as great, as vast, and luminous! Comes this singular faculty of the strength or infirmity of our mental powers? I know not; but it is strange — passing strange! But now I compared this red-haired girl to a dove; by the chain of ideas thus engendered I was carried on to recollection of the detestable old hag who has trafficked in the souls and bodies of so many of her fellow creatures. Then mere commonplace phrases came

into my head, — a ring to a cat, a necklace to a fish! And suddenly, at the word necklace, a sudden light sprung to my eyes and cleared away the mist and darkness in which all my attempts to disunite these invulnerable lovers have hitherto been wrapped. Yes, the talismanic word, necklace, has unlocked that portion of my brain which has been blocked up by stupidity and want of judgment for I know not how long."

And again pacing the room with increased rapidity, Rodin continued:

"Yes, yes, it is a thing worth trying; and the more I reflect upon it, the more feasible does the project appear to me. The only thing is about that old hag, De la Sainte-Colombe; by what means shall I — ? Oh, there is that great, fat simpleton, Jacques Dumoulin — right! And then the other, where to find her? Or, if found, how prevail on her? Ah, there's the difficulty! Now comes a stumbling-block in my way. I was rather too hasty in calling out 'Victory!'"

And then with renewed energy Rodin recommenced his rapid pace up and down the room, biting his nails with a sort of intensity of thought and fixedness of idea which manifested itself after a time by sending large drops of perspiration to his brow, trickling down his meagre, sallow cheeks, as the Jesuit continued his agitated walk. The increased tension of his mind sometimes overcame him so much that he would suddenly stop, and then, vehemently stamping on the ground, resume his troubled march, sometimes raising his eyes upwards as if seeking some inspiration; then, while he gnawed the nails of his right hand, he continually rubbed down his bald skull with his left hand, giving utterance to various exclamations expressive of vexation, anger, or hope, sometimes as though sanguine of success, at others, breathing utter despair. Had the cause of all these painful meditations been a less atrocious one, it might have afforded a curious and interesting spectacle

to have been an invisible witness of the workings of a mind so powerful, so dangerous; to follow the rapid succession of thoughts and desires as impressed upon his agitated countenance, as it worked and varied according to the different lights in which his mental vision reviewed the project upon which he had concentrated all his resources, and employed all the strength and zeal of his masterly spirit.

Apparently his deliberations were bringing the subject of his reverie to a satisfactory conclusion; for all at once Rodin exclaimed:

"True, true! It is venturesome, bold, and hazardous; but, at least, it can instantly be put in practice, and, should success attend it, the advantages will be incalculable. Who can undertake to foretell all the consequences of the explosion of a mine?" Then, yielding to an enthusiasm which was by no means natural to him, the Jesuit, with flashing eyes and exulting mien, exclaimed, "Oh, the passions, the passions! What a magnificent keyboard for such as possess a finger firm yet light and skilful enough to touch it properly! And what a stupendous gift is the power of commanding and arranging our thoughts! What a field of mental wonders does it not embrace! Let those who talk largely of the miraculous process by which an acorn becomes an oak, a grain of wheat an ear, henceforward bow in silence to the superior operation of thought; for while the grain of wheat must have months ere it can become an ear, and the acorn demand a century ere the tree it gives birth to attains maturity, from merely the combination of a few letters, forming the work necklace, — ay, from that single word, dropped, as it were, by accident into my brain a few minutes ago, — has sprung up an immense, a gigantic structure, which, like the oak, has a thousand ramifications and roots, shooting upwards and stretching downwards where none see them. And all for the great glory of the Lord! Yes, for

that alone do I thus toil and rack my understanding to devise what is fittest to be done; but then it is that the Lord may be served according to my notions and views, when I reach, as reach I must, the aim and end of my ambition, for these Renneponts will have passed away like so many shadows; and what difference can it make to moral order, whether the whole family be expunged from the face of the earth or not? Who would ever dream of putting the lives of such insignificant beings in the same scales as the interests of such a cause as ours, whilst the splendid inheritance my daring hand casts into the balance will cause me to ascend to a height from whence even monarchs are controlled and people compelled to obey?" Then, bursting into a fit of savage laughter, Rodin resumed, as he precipitately traversed the chamber to and fro, "Only let me reach the good fortune of Sixtus V., — that is all, — and the world shall see, to her infinite astonishment, what spiritual dominion and authority are when placed in such hands as mine, — of a priest who has reached the age of fifty years, forswearing all the temptations of this life, and who, even if he should ascend the papal chair, would still live on his frugal, self-denying, anchorite's life!"

The expression of Rodin's features was really frightful to behold, as he pronounced these words. All the sanguinary, sacrilegious, and vile ambition recorded in the histories of those popes whose crimes have obtained for them a disgraceful notoriety seemed to glow in characters of blood on the forehead of this worthy follower of Ignatius. A thirst for dominion seemed to inflame the impure blood of the Jesuit, a burning fever consumed him, and large drops of thick, clammy perspiration stood on his agitated features.

All at once, the sound of a travelling carriage entering the courtyard of the house in the Rue de Vangirard attracted the attention of Rodin, who, vexed with him-

self for having given way to so much excitement, drew from his pocket a dirty handkerchief composed of red and white checks; this he dipped in a glass of water and bathed his forehead, temples, and cheeks, gradually approaching the window as he did so to endeavour to make out, by peeping through the half open blinds, who was the traveller whose arrival had put all his ambitious reveries to flight.

A projecting portico before the door at which the carriage had stopped, however, effectually screened it from the scrutinising glance of Rodin.

"No matter," said he, gradually recovering his ordinary coolness and self-possession, "I shall soon know who has arrived. Let me write at once to that fellow, Jacques Dumoulin, to come hither immediately; he served me well and faithfully as regarded that wretched girl who lived in the Rue Clovis, and almost cracked the tympanum of my ears by screaming out her songs from Béranger. Dumoulin may again render me a considerable assistance; I have him in my power, and he dare not refuse." So saying, Rodin seated himself before his desk and began to write.

A few seconds had scarcely elapsed when some person tapped at his door, doubly locked, though contrary to the established rules of his Order; but from time to time, by dint of his power and influence, Rodin contrived to obtain his general's permission to be relieved of the troublesome presence of a *socius*, always protesting the necessity for his being allowed entire freedom from all restraint, the better to work out the Company's good; and by this means Rodin had contrived to evade most of the disagreeable and stringent regulations of the society to which he belonged.

A servant entered and delivered a letter to Rodin, who, calmly taking it from him, held it in his hand without opening it, and said, with an air of indifference:

"What carriage was that which just now arrived?"

"It came from Rome, reverend father," replied the servant, bowing.

"From Rome?" repeated Rodin, eagerly; and spite of himself a vague inquietude spread itself over his features; then, in a calmer manner, he added, still holding the unopened letter in his hands, "And who was in the carriage? Do you happen to know?"

"A reverend father belonging to our holy Company."

Spite of his intense curiosity, — for Rodin well knew that a reverend messenger thus travelling post was always the bearer of some important mission, — he asked not another question; but changing the subject, merely said, "From whence comes this letter?"

"From our holy establishment at St. Herem, reverend father."

Looking more attentively at the handwriting, Rodin recognised it as that of D'Aigrigny, who had been entrusted to watch the last moments of M. Hardy. The letter contained these words:

"I despatch an express to your reverence for the purpose of communicating a fact more astonishing than important. After the funeral rites had been performed over the remains of M. François Hardy, the coffin containing the body was placed temporarily in a vault of our chapel, preparatory to its being possible to convey it to the cemetery of the neighbouring town. This morning, when some of our people went down to the vault for the purpose of commencing the necessary preparations for the removal of the corpse, the coffin with its contents had disappeared."

Rodin started with surprise, and exclaimed, "Most strange!" Then he continued the perusal of the letter.

"All our attempts to discover any traces of this singular and sacrilegious act have utterly failed; but the chapel, standing (as you know) at a distance from the main building, and being wholly unprotected, nothing could have been easier than for any person to enter

it without occasioning the least alarm. All we have been enabled to ascertain is, that a four-wheeled carriage must have been employed by the persons concerned in the affair, as marks of the wheels were visible on the ground, which had been saturated by the late heavy rains; but, at a short distance from the chapel, these marks were lost in the thick sand which here abounds, and further discovery rendered impossible."

"Who could it have been?" murmured Rodin, with a thoughtful air and look; "and what man could possibly have had sufficient interest in the matter to care about carrying off a corpse?"

He then resumed the perusal of the letter.

"Happily the death has been duly and legally attested by a medical officer, whom I summoned from Etampes for the purpose of verifying the decease, etc.; consequently, the fact and individuality of the death of M. François Hardy being regularly established, there can be no difficulty in establishing our rights to all property left by him, as well as to prove ourselves his lawful heirs to any succession that may hereafter arise, he having bestowed on our holy Order all present and future interest in his possessions, lands, or money, to all intents and purposes; but still I deemed it my duty to send immediate information to your reverence of the strange disappearance of the body, in order that you may take what steps may seem best to you, etc."

"D'Aigrigny is right," said Rodin; "the circumstance is in itself more strange than important; yet it demands being well considered and reflected on: it shall be duly weighed and attended to." Turning towards the servant from whom he had received the letter, and who still stood awaiting further orders ere he ventured to quit the room, Rodin said to him, as he gave him the note he had written to Nini-Moulin, "Send this letter immediately according to its address, and desire the person to wait for an answer!"

"I will, father!"

Just as the servant was quitting the room, a reverend father entered, saying to Rodin:

"Father Caboccini from Rome has just arrived, the bearer of a most important message to your reverence from our most reverend general."

At these words the blood of Rodin rushed violently to his heart, but he preserved the most imperturbable calmness, as he merely replied:

"Where is Father Caboccini?"

"In the next room, your reverence!"

"Beg of him to come hither, and then leave us," said Rodin.

The next minute the Reverend Father Caboccini, the envoy from Rome, entered the room, and remained alone with Rodin.

CHAPTER XXVII.

SET A THIEF TO CATCH A THIEF.

THE Reverend Father Caboccini, the Roman Jesuit who entered Rodin's apartment, was a little man, thirty years of age at most, plump, rosy, and with stomach which made his black cassock to protrude conspicuously. The worthy small *père* was one-eyed, but his one eye was a piercer; his round visage was joyous and smiling, and splendidly crowned with a thick mass of chestnut hair, curled in tight curls. His manner was cordial even to familiarity, and his free and easy manners harmonised marvellously with his features.

In a second Rodin had analysed the Italian emissary, and as he knew his Company and the customs of Rome to his fingers' end, he experienced momentarily a kind of sinister presentiment at the sight of the worthy little *père* with such courteous manners; he would less have doubted some long and bony reverend father, with austere and sepulchral face, for he knew that the Society endeavoured as much as possible to set aside the suspicions of the curious by the physiognomy and exterior of its agents. If Rodin's forebodings were just, to judge by the cordial greetings of this emissary, he was charged with some very serious and fatal errand.

Mistrusting, attentive, with his eye and mind on the alert, like an old wolf that smells and anticipates an attack or a surprise, Rodin, according to his custom, had slowly and with snake-like movement advanced towards the little one-eyed man, in order to examine him leisurely

and to penetrate accurately beneath his jovial exterior; but the Roman did not give him time, for with a burst of impetuous affection he rushed from the door to Rodin's neck, squeezing him in his arms with the greatest display of affection, embracing him again and again, and then kissing him on both cheeks so vigorously and noisily that his resounding kisses echoed from one end of the apartment to the other.

Rodin had never in his life been thus encountered, and more and more uneasy at the deceit he felt was concealed beneath such warm embraces, moreover bitterly irritated by his depressing presentiments, the French Jesuit made every exertion to get away from the very exaggerated tokens of tenderness of the Romish Jesuit; but the latter held his arm well and firmly. His arms, though short, were very potent, and Rodin was kissed and kissed again by the little roundabout one-eyed priest, until the Italian's strength and wind failed him.

It is useless to say that these excessive huggings were accompanied by the most amicable, affectionate, and fraternal exclamations, all delivered in very good French, but with an Italian accent, excessively broad, and in a *patois* that was very comic.

It will perhaps be remembered that, aware of the dangers which his ambitious machinations might draw down upon him, and knowing from records that the use of poison had often been considered, at Rome, as an affair of state policy, Rodin, rendered suspicious by the arrival of the Cardinal Malipieri, and fiercely attacked by the cholera, yet ignorant that his bitter agony was occasioned by symptoms of the contagion, had exclaimed, as he darted a furious glance at the Romish prelate:

"I am poisoned!"

The same apprehensions came involuntarily to the Jesuit whilst he was endeavouring, by violent and useless efforts, to escape the embraces of his general's emissary, and he said to himself:

"This one-eyed individual is very tender; but is there not the poison of Judas beneath these kisses?"

At length the good little Père Caboccini, quite out of breath, was compelled to let go Rodin's neck, who, adjusting his greasy collar, his cravat, and worn-out waistcoat, which had been outrageously rumpled by the severity of these caresses, said, in a blunt tone:

"Your servant, father — your servant; there's no occasion for so much kissing."

But without replying to this reproach, the good little father, fixing on Rodin his solitary eye with an expression of enthusiasm, and accompanying these words with petulant gestures, said, in his *patois* (impossible to render in translation):

"At length I see this superb light of our holy Society, and can press him to my heart! yes, yes — again and again."

And as the reverend father was fast getting into his second wind, he was about to dash again on Rodin's bosom, when the Frenchman retreated with quickness, extending his arms as if to ward him off, and saying to this remorseless embracer, in allusion to the comparison so illogically made use of by the Père Caboccini:

"Good, good, my father; but we do not squeeze lights against our hearts — even if I were a light, which I am not. I am merely a humble and obscure labourer in the vineyard of the Lord."

The Roman replied, with enthusiasm and emphasis:

"You are right, father; we do not squeeze lights against our hearts, but we prostrate ourselves before them to admire their resplendent, dazzling brilliancy."

And Père Caboccini was about to "suit the action to the word," and going on his knees before Rodin, if the latter had not anticipated this adulatory movement and restrained him by the arm, saying to him impatiently:

"This is a little too like idolatry, father. No more,

no more of me personally, but let us come to the main purpose of your journey — what is that?"

"The purpose, dear father, that purpose fills me with joy, happiness, tenderness. I have endeavoured to testify to you this tenderness by my caresses and embraces, for my heart is in my sleeve; even on my way, my journey, it turned to you — swelled to you, my dear, dear father. This purpose, oh, it transports, it ravishes me! This purpose! Why — it — "

"But this purpose which ravishes you," exclaimed Rodin, exasperated at the exaggerations of southern origin, and interrupting the Roman, "this purpose — what is it?"

"This rescript of our most reverend and most excellent general will instruct you, my very dear father." And Caboccini took from his pocketbook a paper folded and sealed with three seals, which he kissed respectfully before he handed it to Rodin, who took it, and, after having kissed it himself, opened it with extreme anxiety.

Whilst he read it, the Jesuit's features remained impassive, — nothing betokened his internal agitation but a hasty beating of the pulses in his temples.

Then putting the letter calmly into his pocket, Rodin looked at the Roman and said:

"All shall be done as orders our most excellent general."

"Thus, then," exclaimed Père Caboccini, with a revival of enthusiasm and excessive admiration, "it is I who shall be now and hereafter the shadow of your light — your second self; I shall have the happiness of never quitting you day nor night, — of being your *socius*, in a word. Since after having granted to you the faculty of not having one for some time, according to your desire, and in the best interest of the affairs of our holy Company, our most excellent general thinks it fit to send me from Rome to you to fulfil this function: unhoped-for favour — immense — and which fills me with gratitude

for our general, and tenderness for you, my dear and worthy father!"

"This is well acted," thought Rodin, "but I am not to be caught with such chaff; and, besides, it is only in the kingdom of the blind that one-eyed men are kings."

The same evening on which this scene passed between the Jesuit and the new *socius*, Nini-Moulin, after having received Rodin's instructions (in Caboccini's presence), went to Madame de la Sainte-Colombe.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE.

MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE, who, at the beginning of this recital, had gone to visit the grounds and Château de Cardoville, with the intention of purchasing this property, had made her fortune by keeping a milliner's shop in the Palais Royal when the allies entered Paris. It was a remarkable house, in which the workwomen were always fresher and handsomer than the bonnets they made and sold. It would be difficult to detail the modes by which this creature had contrived to amass the considerable fortune on which the reverend *pères*, totally regardless of the origin of such property, so that they could pocket it (*ad majorem Dei gloriam*), had cast longing eyes and serious intentions. They had proceeded according to the A B C of their trade. This woman was a weak, vulgar, coarse-minded creature. The reverend fathers managed an introduction to her, and had not overblamed her for her former life. They had even found means of extenuating these peccadilloes, for their moral code is easy and elastic; but they had announced to her that, even as a calf becomes a bull in time, so peccadilloes increase with impenitence; and as they increase with years so they conclude by attaining the proportions of enormous sins; and then, as a fearful punishment of these sins, came the well-timed representation of the devil and his horns, his flames, and pitchforks. In the reverse case, the repression of these peccadilloes would come in good time if assuaged in the

shape of a good and bountiful donation to the Company; the reverend fathers would speedily dismiss Lucifer to his furnaces, and guarantee to Sainte-Colombe (for a good lump of ready money or landed bequest) a prominent berth amongst the elect.

Despite the ordinary efficacy of these means, this conversion presented many difficulties. La Sainte-Colombe, subject from time to time to terrible returns of youthful feelings, had quite worn out two or three spiritual directors. And Nini-Moulin, who really and seriously coveted the fortune and with it (compulsorily) the hand of this creature, had considerably damaged the plans of the right reverends.

At the moment when the religious writer went to La Sainte-Colombe as Rodin's messenger, she occupied an apartment on the first floor in the Rue de Richelieu, for, in spite of her retirement from business, this woman found infinite pleasure in the noisy din and perpetual bustle of a thronged and principal thoroughfare; her apartment was richly furnished, but usually dirty and messy, in spite of, or in consequence of, the care of two or three domestics, with whom La Sainte-Colombe was on terms of decided familiarity or quarrelling like a fury.

We will introduce the reader into the sanctuary in which this creature had been for some time in secret confidence with Nini-Moulin.

The neophyte so much coveted by the right reverend fathers was seated on a mahogany sofa covered with crimson silk. She had two cats on her knees and a spaniel at her feet, whilst a large old gray parrot was moving backwards and forwards at the back of the sofa; a green paroquet, less favoured or not so tame, shrieked out from time to time, chained to a stand placed near the window. The parrot did not cry out, but occasionally interspersed conversation by uttering coarse oaths in a loud voice, or giving out the language of the fish-market or those haunts of vice in which he had passed his youth.

The truth was, that this old pet of La Sainte-Colombe had received from his mistress (before her conversion) his by no means refined education, and had even been christened by her with a very ill-sounding name, for which, however, La Sainte-Colombe, on the abjuration of her early errors, had substituted the modest name of Barnabé.

As to La Sainte-Colombe's portrait, she was a stout woman of about fifty, with a broad, florid face, somewhat bearded, and with a masculine voice. She had on this evening an orange turban and a gown of violet velvet, although it was the end of May. She had, moreover, rings on all her fingers, and around her forehead a *ferronière* of diamonds.

Nini-Moulin had laid aside his paletot-sac, although not very spruce in his ordinary attire, for a suit of black, with a large white waistcoat *à la Robespierre;* his hair lay flattened on his projecting skull, and he had assumed a most devout look, which he believed better suited to his matrimonial schemes and to counterbalance the influence of the Abbé Corbinet than the airs of Roger-Bontems which he had at first affected.

At this moment the religious writer, laying aside his own interest, thought only of succeeding in the delicate mission with which Rodin had charged him, — a mission which, besides, had been offered to him very adroitly by the Jesuit under the most acceptable appearances, and whose aim being as he believed honourable, formed the excuse for means somewhat hazardous.

"Thus," said Nini-Moulin, continuing a conversation begun some time, "she is twenty years old?"

"At most," replied La Sainte-Colombe, who seemed possessed with very great curiosity; "but it is still a great farce what you now tell me, my stout darling." La Sainte-Colombe was, it will be seen, already on a footing of easy familiarity with the religious writer.

"Farce is not quite the proper word, my worthy

friend," replied Nini-Moulin, with a peculiar air; "it is touching — interesting, you should say. For if by to-morrow you could find the person in question — "

"The devil! By to-morrow, my trump?" said La Sainte-Colombe, cavalierly. "How fast you get on! Why it is more than a year since I heard of her! No, no, Antonia, whom I met a month since, told me where she was — "

"But can you not find her out by the means you first thought of?"

"Yes, fat darling; but it is very tiresome to take a great deal of trouble in such a matter when one has left off the habit — "

"What, my charming friend! You so good, you who work so hard for your own salvation, do you hesitate at a little trouble or inconvenience, when it is to effect a very desirable and worthy end — when it is to snatch a young girl from the snares of Satan and all his works?"

Here parrot Barnabé uttered two fearful oaths with perfect articulation.

In her first feeling of indignation La Sainte-Colombe cried, as she turned towards Barnabé with an angry, revolted air:

"This —— (a word quite as coarse as that uttered by Barnabé) will never reform. Will you hold your tongue?" (Here again Barnabé let fly a whole volume of his usual expletives.) "He really does it on purpose. Yesterday he made the Abbé Corbinet blush to his ears. Will you hold your tongue?"

"If you always scold Barnabé in this severe way," said Nini-Moulin, preserving his seriousness to perfection, "you will eventually correct him. But to return to our affair. Come, be what you naturally are, my worthy friend, so excessively obliging — hasten to do an action doubly good. In the first instance to snatch, as I said, a young girl from Satan and his vanities by giving her an honourable position, that is to say, the means of re-

turning to virtue; and then — a thing equally noble — try and restore, perchance, to her senses, a poor mother, gone mad with grief. To effect this very little trouble is required."

"But why this girl more than any other, my dear fellow? Is it because she is a kind of rarity?"

"Assuredly, my worthy friend; and remember, the poor crazy mother, whom they are so desirous to restore to reason, might be (as we hope) recovered at the sight of her child."

"That's true."

"So come, my worthy friend, do make a little effort."

"Go away, you coaxer!" said La Sainte-Colombe, in her most dulcet tone; "one must do all you wish."

"Then," said Nini-Moulin, anxiously, "you promise —"

"I promise — and, more than that, I will go at once, and do all I can; it will be the sooner managed. This evening I shall know enough to decide whether it can be done or not."

So saying, La Sainte-Colombe rose with an effort, deposited her two cats on the sofa, pushed the dog away with her foot, and rang the bell vigorously.

"You are really most kind," said Nini-Moulin, with dignity. "I shall never forget it during my life."

"Don't trouble yourself, my stout friend," said La Sainte-Colombe to the religious writer; "it is not on your account that I have resolved to do this!"

"Then on whose account, or why?" inquired Nini-Moulin.

"Ah, that's my secret!" replied La Sainte-Colombe. Then addressing her *femme de chambre*, who entered:

"My girl, tell Ratisbonne to go and fetch me a coach, and give me my coquelicot velvet hat and feathers."

Whilst the servant was gone to execute her mistress's orders, Nini-Moulin went towards La Sainte-Colombe, and said to her, in a low voice, and with an insinuating and gentle air:

"You will at least remark, my charming friend, that I have not uttered one word about my love this evening. Do you not give me credit for my discretion?"

At this moment La Sainte-Colombe had taken off her turban, and turning around suddenly she put this headdress on Nini-Moulin's bald pate, laughing loudly as she did so. The religious writer appeared overjoyed with this proof of confidence, and, at the moment when the servant returned with the shawl and hat of her mistress, he kissed the turban passionately, looking askance at La Sainte-Colombe.

The day after this scene, Rodin, whose countenance appeared triumphant, put with his own hands into the post a letter thus addressed:

To Monsieur Agricola Baudoin,
Rue Brise-Miche, No. 2,
Paris.

[*With speed.*]

CHAPTER XXIX.

FARINGHEA'S AMOUR.

DJALMA, it may be remembered, when he first learned that he was beloved by Adrienne, had in the excess of his happiness said to Faringhea, whose treachery he had detected:

"You are leagued with my enemies, yet I never did you any ill. You are wicked, because, doubtless, you are unhappy; I would render you happy that you may be good. Would you have gold?—you shall have gold; would you have a friend?—you are a slave, I am a king's son; I offer you my friendship."

Faringhea had refused the gold, and affected to accept the friendship of Kadja-Sing's son. Endowed with singular intelligence and profound dissimulation, the métis had easily persuaded of the sincerity of his repentance, his gratitude, and his attachment, a man of a character so confiding, so generous, as Djalma's; besides, what motive could he have to distrust the slave becoming his friend? Certain of Mlle. de Cardoville's love, with whom he passed every day, he would have been defended by the salutary influence of the young girl against the perfidious counsels or calumnies of the métis, the faithful and secret instrument of Rodin, who had affiliated him to the Company; but Faringhea, whose tact was perfect, did not act without caution. He never spoke to the prince or Mlle. de Cardoville, but discreetly awaited the confidence which the overflowing delight of Djalma sometimes disclosed.

A very few days after Adrienne had fled from the display of Djalma's passion, — the day after that on which Rodin, certain of the success of Nini-Moulin with La Sainte-Colombe, had himself put a letter in the post addressed to Agricola Baudoin, — the métis, who had for some time seemed very gloomy, appeared so dejected that the prince, struck with the appearance of the man in whom he was interested as well from affection as happiness, asked him several times the cause of this overwhelming sorrow; but the métis, whilst he thanked the prince for the interest he evinced with gratitude, preserved the same dispirited air.

This stated, the following scene may be conceived. It took place towards the middle of the day, in a small house in the Rue de Clichy, occupied by the Indian.

Djalma, contrary to his usual custom, had not passed the day with Adrienne, as the day before he had been informed by the young girl that she should ask of him the sacrifice of the whole day, that she might employ it in taking the necessary measures that their union might be blessed and acceptable in the eyes of the world, and yet might remain surrounded by the restrictions which she and Djalma desired; as to the means which Mlle. de Cardoville might employ to attain this result, as to the person, so pure and so honourable, who was to consecrate this union, that was a secret which, belonging only to the young girl, could not yet be confided to Djalma.

As to the Indian, so long accustomed to consecrate every instant to Adrienne, the whole day passed away from her seemed interminable. In turns a prey to burning agitation or a kind of bewilderment, in which he endeavoured to plunge his thoughts to escape those which caused him such overwhelming tortures, Djalma had extended himself on a divan, his face hidden in his hands, as if he desired to escape from a vision that was too tempting. Suddenly Faringhea entered the apartment, without giving a knock on the door as usual.

Djalma, startled at the noise which the métis made as he entered, raised his head and looked about him with surprise, and at the sight of the pale and distressed countenance of the slave he rose suddenly, and advancing towards him exclaimed:

"What ails you, Faringhea?"

After a moment's silence, and as if yielding to a painful hesitation, Faringhea, throwing himself at Djalma's feet, murmured in a faint voice, and despairing, almost supplicating tone:

"I am very unhappy; have pity on me, monseigneur."

The accent of the métis was so touching, the great grief he seemed to experience gave his features, ordinarily so impassive and inflexible, such an expression of agony, that Djalma was touched at it, and, bending down to raise the métis, said to him with affection:

"Speak, speak; confidence soothes the torments of the heart. Have confidence in me; rely on me. The angel said to me, a few days since, happy Love admits no tears about him."

"But unfortunate love, wretched love, betrayed love, sheds tears of blood," replied Faringhea, with extreme dejection.

"What betrayed love do you allude to?" inquired Djalma, surprised.

"I allude to my own love," replied the métis, with a gloomy air.

"Your love?" said Djalma, more and more astonished; not that the métis, who was still young, and had a face of sombre beauty, appeared to him incapable of inspiring or experiencing a tender sentiment, but because he had not believed until then that this man was capable of experiencing so poignant a grief.

"Monseigneur," replied the métis, "you said to me, misfortune has made you wicked, be happy and you will be good. In these words I saw a presage, as if any one had said that, in order for a noble love to enter my

breast, hatred and treachery must quit it. Now I, half a savage, have found a young and lovely female who shared my passion — at least I believed so; but I had been a traitor to you, monseigneur, and for traitors, even if repentant, there is no happiness; and in my turn I have been betrayed — infamously betrayed."

Then, seeing the prince's movement of surprise, the métis added, as if he were overcome with confusion:

"Pray do not jest with me, monseigneur; the most fearful tortures would not have torn this heartrending confession from me; but you, son of a king, have deigned to say to your slave, 'Be my friend.'"

"And that friend thanks you for your confidence," said Djalma, emphatically; "far from jesting, I will console you. Take heart, and do not think I would jest with you."

"Betrayed love merits so much contempt, such insult," said Faringhea, bitterly. "Cowards even have a right to point at you with disdain; in this country, the sight of a man deceived in that which is the soul of his soul, the blood of his blood, the life of his life, makes men shrug their shoulders and burst into derisive laughter."

"But are you certain of this treachery?" replied Djalma; adding, with a degree of hesitation which proved the goodness of his heart, "Listen, and excuse me for speaking to you of the past. Besides, it will prove to you on my part that I do not preserve any bad feeling towards you; and that I believe in the repentance and affection you show me daily. Remember that I also believed that the angel who is now my life did not love me, — yet that was false; who told you that you are not, as I was, abused by false appearances?"

"Alas! monsieur, I would fain believe so, but I dare not hope it; but amid all these perplexities, my brain seems quite turned, and I seem unable to come to any decided conclusion. In my perplexity, therefore, my lord, I venture to beg your advice and kind directions."

"But what has excited your suspicions?"

"The coldness which sometimes succeeds to her most impassioned tenderness; her occasional rejection of my most trifling caress, alleging her 'duties' as the cause; and then —" but, as though withheld by some powerful restraint, the métis did not finish his sentence, but became suddenly silent and thoughtful. After a pause of several minutes he added, "My lord, she reasons too calmly, too dispassionately, when I urge my suit. No, no, all proves too clearly, either that she has never loved me, or that she loves me no longer."

"Nay, I should rather believe in the excess of her regard, if she seeks to elevate the dignity and value of her affection in your eyes."

"That is what they all say," replied the métis, with bitter irony, as he fixed his searching glance on Djalma, "or at least those who love feebly; but the woman whose heart beats with true passion mistrusts not the man she loves; with her, coyness or excess of maiden modesty are not permitted to stand in opposition to the half expressed wish of her lover; to a true mistress the cruel thought could never come, of exciting the passions but for the delight of compelling him to listen to her severe dogmas, her rigid notions. No, no, I say, and I insist that a woman who loves as I would be loved could have no reservations from the object of her affections; and whether the surrender of her life or honour were required of her, at his dear word either or both would be freely given, and that because, in the idolatry of their heart, the wishes of the man they loved would outweigh every consideration, human or divine. But, alas, alas! these women, and above all she who has caused me to endure my present tortures, — these artful beings, whose pride and happiness consist in subduing and conquering man, no matter how proud or impatient of restraint the passive slave may naturally be, — the greater then their triumph in bringing him to their feet. These women, I

say again, who lead a man on, step by step, till the poor victim believes nothing he can ask will be denied,—these women are fiends, who rejoice in the tears of wretchedness of the strong man who loves them with the weakness of a child. And while they are expiring for love at the feet of their obdurate enslavers, these perfidious creatures will just dole out as much love and tenderness as serves to keep alive that passion their vanity would not have extinguished. No, no, they know exactly how far it will be safe and wise to go, that their victim be not driven to utter despair. Oh, how cold, passionless, and weak do these heartless beings appear, compared with the noble generosity of the loving mistress, who, when she reads the wishes of the man of her choice, as expressed in his kindling glances, says to him, with unutterable tenderness: 'Be you happy, O beloved of my heart! And whether shame, sorrow, disgrace, or death overtake me, what care I? My entire existence were well given to spare you a single regret. My life is of less value than one tear from those dear eyes!'"

A slight gloom overspread the forehead of Djalma as he listened to the heated and highly coloured discourse of the mulatto. Having always preserved the strictest silence respecting his passion for Mlle. de Cardoville, the prince could only see in these words an unintentional allusion to the chaste refusals of Adrienne to permit the slightest infringement of the most rigid propriety; yet still the self-love of Djalma felt piqued, as he reflected that Faringhea spoke truly when he said that there were restraints and considerations, duties and observances, which a woman, while professing to have bestowed her heart, allowed to stand between herself and the object of her love. But this unworthy feeling was soon dispelled from the prince's breast, and the sweet image of Adrienne, recovering its wonted influence, put to flight all the sensual and gross-minded arguments of the métis;

the frowning brow resumed its usual calm and open look, and he replied to the mulatto, who was stealthily watching each turn of his expressive countenance, by saying:

"Your uneasiness of mind disturbs your judgment; be assured, if you have no stronger reasons for doubting the fidelity of her you love than vague suspicions and displeasure at her repulsing the ardour of your wishes, that she loves you, — far better, perhaps, than you have ever fancied."

"May your words, my lord, prove those of truth," replied the métis, dejectedly, and as though touched by the words of Djalma; "still I cannot help saying to myself, from time to time, there are evidently objects she prefers to me, — her delicacy, her scruples, her dignity, her honour, are all of superior value than myself; she will not sacrifice one of these personal considerations to my happiness! Well, it matters not! After all these worldly reasons have had their due place, then she can bestow a little thought upon my poor affection."

"My friend, you are paining yourself unnecessarily," said Djalma, mildly, though at the same time a painful feeling shot through his heart at the pertinacity with which the métis reiterated his opinion; "you are wrong; the greater a woman's love the greater is the chaste dignity by which it is guarded, and her very scruples and delicacy are awakened by the sensitiveness of her affection, which influences every word and thought instead of being restrained and governed by worldly motives."

"No doubt my lord is right; and, since this woman imposes on me a certain manner of showing my love, there is nothing left for it but a blind submission — "

Then, suddenly interrupting himself, the mulatto concealed his face in his hands, uttering a heavy groan, while his features expressed a mixture of rage, hatred, and

despair, at once so frightful and yet so sorrowful, that Djalma, pitying him more and more, seized the hand of Faringhea, saying:

"Calm these angry passions, and listen to the voice of friendship, that it may dispel the evil influence which now possesses your mind; speak, say why this fresh burst of anger?"

"No, no; 'tis too dreadful!"

"Speak! nay, I command you, speak!"

"Leave a wretched being like myself to a despair that admits not of cure!"

"Do you think me capable of so doing?" asked Djalma, with a mixture of gentleness and dignity that seemed to produce a lively emotion on the part of the métis.

"Alas!" replied he, still hesitating, "does my lord insist upon it?"

"I do!"

"Well, then, I have not told you all; for, at the moment of confessing the cause of my misery, shame and a dread of ridicule restrained me; but, when you inquired my reasons for believing myself deceived, I spoke of vague suspicions — coldness — reserve — on the part of her I loved, but that was not the entire truth, — this very evening she — the faithless one —"

"Go on — go on!"

"Has appointed a meeting with a favoured lover!"

"How know you that?"

"I learned it from one who, though unknown to me, has seen and pitied my infatuated blindness."

"But how if this should be false, — if this stranger were deceiving you?"

"He has offered me the most incontestable proofs of what he asserts."

"Of what nature are his proofs?"

"He has undertaken to make me an unperceived witness of the meeting of this evening. 'It is possi-

ble,' said he, 'that there may be nothing criminal in the interview, although appearances would indicate the reverse; but judge for yourself,' added the man, 'be courageous enough to do this, and all your cruel doubts and uncertainty will end.'"

"And what reply made you?"

"None whatever, my lord; my brain seemed bewildered then, as it now is, and all I could determine upon was to entreat your advice." Then with a despairing gesture the métis continued, with a look of wildness accompanied with a burst of savage laughter, "Counsel! — advice! why ask them of man when 'tis of the blade of kandjiar I should seek them, and my trusty steel would have replied, 'Blood! blood!'" and with these words the métis convulsively grasped a long poniard he wore in his belt.

There are certain outbreaks of feeling and violence that are fatally contagious as the plague itself.

At the sight of Faringhea's features thus distorted by jealousy and rage, Djalma started, for it brought back to his recollection the remembrance of his own insane fury when the Princesse de Saint-Dizier had defied Adrienne to deny the fact of Agricola Baudoin's being found secreted in her bedchamber, representing him as a favoured lover. But, quickly reassured by the proud and dignified calmness of the noble-minded girl, Djalma's violence had been succeeded by profound contempt for the author of so base a calumny, which Adrienne had not even deigned to take the slightest notice of.

Nevertheless, as the lightning divides and marks the fair face of heaven during a storm, so had the recollection of this unworthy accusation several times occurred with rankling ire to the thoughts of the young Indian, but it had almost as quickly been dispelled by his own confidence in the purity of his beloved, and the smiling consciousness of his well-assured happiness.

These reminiscences, as well as the recollection of

Adrienne's chaste reserve, by rendering Djalma somewhat sad, seemed also to excite in him a greater degree of pity and commiseration for Faringhea than he would otherwise have felt but for this strange and secret similarity between their relative positions; knowing by his own experience to what fearful extremities a blind fury may lead one, and wishing to soften the mind of the métis by kindness and affection, Djalma said to him, in serious though gentle tone:

"I have offered you my friendship, I would fain act towards you according to my words!"

But the mulatto, feigning the most absorbing and deadly fury, continued with fixed and haggard eyes to gaze upon vacancy, as though he heard not the prince, who, finding himself unnoticed, placed his hand lightly on the shoulder of the mulatto, and said:

"Faringhea, hearken to me!"

"My lord," exclaimed the métis, abruptly starting, as though just roused from a deep reverie, "your pardon, but — I — I —"

"In the agony of mind caused by your cruel suspicions, 'tis not of your dagger you should ask counsel or assistance, but of your friend, and have I not already told you that friend is myself?"

"My lord?"

"This rendezvous, which, as you are told, will either prove the guilt or innocence of her you love, — this rendezvous must be watched —"

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed the métis, in a hoarse tone and menacing look, "it must — it shall! I will be there!"

"But not alone; you go not thither unaccompanied!"

"What does my lord mean?" inquired the mulatto, with an air of perplexity, "whom should I get to accompany me?"

"Your faithful friend, — myself!"

"You, my lord?"

"Yes; it may be to save you from the commission of a crime; for well I know how blind and unjust are our first impulses of anger."

"But," replied Faringhea, with a bitter smile, "'tis our first impulses that serve to avenge us."

"Faringhea, I have the whole of to-day at my disposal, I will not quit you for an instant," said the prince, resolutely; "either you do not attend this meeting, or else I go with you!"

As though conquered by this generous persistence, the mulatto fell at the feet of Djalma and caught his hand, which he carried respectfully first to his forehead, then to his lips, saying:

"My lord must not be generous by halves; he must also grant me his pardon!"

"Pardon? Pardon for what?"

"For having had the boldness to form within my own breast the audacious wish to crave of you the very favour you so graciously offer me! Yes, not knowing whither my blind fury might lead me, I had purposed beseeching of you to accord me a proof of kindness you would probably have refused to an equal; and until it came to the point I durst not, any more than avow the whole extent of the treachery and perfidy I apprehend; and my only motive in seeking you to-day was to tell you I was wretched, because you were the only person in the world to whom I could own my misery."

It is impossible to convey an accurate idea of the almost childlike simplicity and guileless candour with which the métis pronounced these words, or the expressive tone of voice, mingled with tears, which succeeded his late ferocity.

Deeply affected, Djalma, kindly extending his hand, said to him:

"You were entitled to claim a proof of friendship at my hands; and I feel pleased and happy at having thus anticipated your wishes. Come, come, take courage, and

hope for the best. I will bear you company to this meeting; and, if I may trust my own presentiments, you will find that you have been the dupe of false appearances!"

When it was perfectly dark, the métis and Djalma, well concealed amid the folds of their large wrapping-cloaks, ascended a fiacre, which, according to Faringhea's bidding, drove rapidly towards the abode of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe.

CHAPTER XXX.

AN EVENING AT MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE'S.

We left Djalma and Faringhea proceeding in a fiacre to the residence of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, but ere we proceed to narrate the particulars of the journey it will be necessary to cast a retrospective glance at some preparatory circumstances. Nini-Moulin, who still continued in absolute ignorance of the real purport of the various steps he took at Rodin's instigation, had gone the preceding evening according to the Jesuit's desire to offer to Madame de la Sainte-Colombe a very considerable sum, in order to induce this person, who still retained an inordinate craving after money, to give up the entire occupation of her apartments for a whole day. La Sainte-Colombe having accepted the proposition, which was far too tempting for one of her sordid, avaricious nature to refuse, had set out at an early hour in the morning with her servants, giving it out that she wished to requite their faithful services by taking them to spend a long day in the country.

Left master of the place, Rodin, with his bald head covered with a black wig, a pair of blue glass spectacles on his nose, wrapped in a cloak, and having the lower part of his countenance buried in a deep white worsted neck-wrapper, — in a word, so completely disguised as to render recognition impossible, — had come at an early hour with Faringhea to survey the apartments and to give the necessary orders to the métis, who, ere the Jesuit had been gone a couple of hours, had by his intelligence

and address made the various and most important preparations, after which he hastily returned home to play the part of detestable hypocrisy to which Djalma was so unsuspecting a victim.

During the drive from the Rue de Clichy to the residence of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, situated in the Rue de Richelieu, Faringhea remained plunged in a deep and painful reverie, which he suddenly broke by saying to Djalma, in a hoarse and abrupt tone:

"If I am betrayed, then, my lord, I must have a fearful vengeance!"

"And what can you have more bitter than contempt? What revenge can be more stingingly terrible than to despise your foe?"

"No, no," continued the métis, with an accent of ill-restrained rage, "no, that suffices not my burning thirst, and the nearer the moment of trial approaches, the more certain do I feel it can only be quenched in blood."

"Hearken to me!"

"My lord, my lord! I beseech you to have pity on me; I confess my former weakness and cowardice; I own that I trembled and drew back at the idea of avenging my wrongs; but now I have bent my mind to the task, and the false-hearted being who has thus destroyed my happiness shall have her full reward. Yes, she shall receive back torture for torture, groan for groan. Ah, my lord, permit me to quit you and to go alone to this meeting."

And with these words Faringhea made a feigned attempt to precipitate himself out of the carriage. Djalma, however, seized him quickly by the arm, saying:

"Remain where you are; I will not leave you; and if you find that you have been betrayed, 'tis not by blood but contempt you shall seek to avenge your wrongs. Turn from the faithless to the faithful, and let friendship console your exasperated feelings."

"No, no, my lord, I am fixed in my deadly design;

hen I have slain my foe, then will I kill myself," exclaimed the mulatto, with savage energy. "To the false perjured wretches who have wronged me do I devote the keen blade of this kandjiar," cried he, clutching the poniard he still wore in his belt; "mine be the poison contained in its sheath!"

"Faringhea!"

"Pardon me, my lord, for presuming to offer the least opposition to your will; but my destiny must be accomplished!"

Time was hurrying on, and Djalma, despairing of being able to calm the ferocious rage of the métis, resolved upon employing a species of artifice.

After a few minutes' silence he said to Faringhea:

"I will not leave you; I will do all in my power to spare you the commission of a crime, and if I fail, let the blood you shed be on your head alone — never again shall my hand be placed in contact with yours!"

These words appeared to produce a lively impression on the mind of Faringhea, who, heaving a deep sigh, let his head drop forwards on his breast, while Djalma prepared by the aid of the feeble light cast into the vehicle from the outside lamps to employ either force or sudden surprise to dispossess the métis of his deadly weapon, when having by an oblique glance discovered the prince's intention, the mulatto suddenly plucked the kandjiar from his belt, then handing it to Djalma, said, in a solemn yet savage voice:

"This dagger is terrible and death-dealing when wielded by a firm and steady hand, but here in this small phial is contained one of the most subtle poisons of our country;" and pushing back a spring concealed in the setting of the kandjiar, the handle lifted half up like a lid, and displayed a small crystal phial hid in the thickness of the hilt of this murderous weapon. "Two or three drops of this poison sprinkled on the lips," continued the métis, "will bring a slow but calm and painless

death, the only symptom being the discloration of the nails, which turn blue at the expiration of a few hours; but he who should drain this small phial of its contents would die on the instant without pain or suffering, falling to the earth as though stricken by a thunderbolt."

"I know," replied Djalma, "that our country produces strange and mysterious poisons; some freezing up by slow degrees the channels; others operating with the instantaneous precision of a cannon-ball; but wherefore should you thus dwell on the destructive properties of this murderous weapon?"

"To prove to you, my lord, that this kandjiar is at once the means of securing my vengeance, and preserving me from the consequences of taking the punishment of my foe into my own hands: with this dagger I slay those who have injured me; with this poison I escape by a speedy death from the justice of men. And yet, though this kandjiar thus forms my sole dependence as regards my revenge, I resign it to you; take it, my lord, I could more easily renounce my hopes of vengeance than risk an act that bars me from the touch of your hand for the rest of my life." And with a look of mingled respect, submission, and heartfelt misery, the métis presented the poniard to the prince.

As much surprised as delighted with this unexpected resolution, Djalma hastily placed the terrible weapon in his girdle, while the métis resumed, in a voice of intense emotion:

"Keep this kandjiar, my lord, and when you have seen and heard what we are about to witness, you shall either give me the poniard and I will strike a guilty and unworthy wretch to the heart, or you shall give me the weapon, and I will die without giving a blow; 'tis for you to command and for me to obey."

As Djalma was about to reply, the carriage stopped at the residence of Madame de la Sainte-Colombe, and the prince with the métis, both well wrapped up and con-

cealed in their mantles, entered beneath a sort of gateway, the gates of which immediately closed upon them, when Faringhea, having said a few words in a low tone to the porter, received a key from him.

The two Indians then proceeded direct to one of the doors communicating with Madame de la Sainte-Colombe's apartments, which contained two entrances from the landing-place, and a back staircase that led out to the court below. At the moment when Faringhea was putting the key into the lock, he said to Djalma, in an agitated voice:

"My lord, I pray you to pardon my weakness; but at this fearful moment I tremble, and can scarcely resolve to follow up my resolution. Perhaps it would have been better to have remained a prey to my doubts, or to have endeavoured to forget that I had any —"

Then, as the prince was about to speak, the métis exclaimed:

"No, no, let me be firm! A coward they shall not make me;" and opening the door in a hurried manner he entered, followed by Djalma. The door closed; the métis and the prince found themselves in utter darkness in a sort of narrow corridor.

"Give me your hand, my lord, and let me guide you," said the mulatto, in a low tone; "tread lightly," continued he, as he extended his hand to the prince, who took it and proceeded silently and cautiously by his side along the dark passage.

After having made Djalma take a long and circuitous walk, opening and shutting several doors the more effectually to mystify him as to the direction they had gone in, the métis suddenly stopped, and letting drop the prince's hand, which he had continued to hold up to that moment, said, in a low voice:

"My lord, the decisive moment approaches, let us wait here a few instants." A profound silence followed these words.

So great was the darkness that Djalma could discern

nothing, but at the expiration of a few seconds he could hear Faringhea moving away from him, then all at once the noise of a door quickly opened, and then double locked.

This sudden disappearance began to create a feeling of uneasiness in the mind of Djalma. By a mechanical movement he felt for his dagger, and finding it safe in his girdle, commenced a rapid attempt to grope his way towards the spot from whence he imagined the sounds to have proceeded. All at once the voice of the métis struck on the prince's ear, and without its being possible to discover the precise place where the speaker stood, these words were clearly and distinctly heard:

"You bade me be your friend, my lord; I have acted as such, and even employed stratagem to bring you hither. Had I told you the truth, the blind infatuation of your fatal passion would have prevented your following me or listening to my counsel. You have heard from the Princesse de Saint-Dizier of Agricola Baudoin, the favoured lover of Adrienne de Cardoville. Now hearken! behold! and judge for yourself!"

The voice which had seemed to proceed from one of the corners of the room here ceased, leaving Djalma still in utter darkness, and half suffocated with rage at finding, too late, the snare into which he had fallen.

"Faringhea!" exclaimed he, "where am I? Whither have you gone? Answer me on your life! and throw open these doors I have so treacherously been made to enter — I would depart instantly!" And with these words Djalma rushed precipitately forward till he struck against a wall covered with some soft material, like silk or stuff. Eagerly passing his hands over it, in search of some outlet, he at length felt what with joy he recognised as a door, but so firmly secured as to resist all his attempts to force it open. In vain he shook it, the lock refused to give way; and, tired and disheartened, he was compelled to abandon the fruitless effort, and

resume his researches around the chamber. Still groping his way, he came to a fireplace, the fire of which was wholly extinct; then to a second door, equally well secured with the first he had met. In a few seconds he had gone all around the apartment, and found himself again by the fireplace he had before remarked. The prince's uneasiness grew stronger and stronger, and, with a voice tremulous with rage, he called loudly on Faringhea, without receiving any reply; while the most profound silence reigned without, and all within was enveloped in the utmost obscurity. Ere long a sort of perfumed vapour, of indescribable sweetness, but of a most subtle and penetrating kind, began by almost insensible degrees to spread itself throughout the chamber in which Djalma was standing. As the aromatic odour diffused its balmy richness over the senses of the young Indian, it seemed as though it were introduced by means of a tube passed through one of the doors of the chamber. A prey to the many painful and perplexing ideas by which his mind was oppressed, Djalma had at first paid no attention to this circumstance; but many minutes had not elapsed before the arteries of his temples began to beat violently; a burning and fervid heat circulated rapidly in his veins, while a vague and indefinable feeling of happiness stole over him. The angry passions which had so recently animated him seemed to die away by degrees, and to lose themselves in a delicious torpor, which lulled both mind and body to rest and forgetfulness, without his being scarcely conscious himself of the moral transformation he underwent, even in spite of himself.

Still, by a last effort of his fast failing resolution, Djalma hurried forwards, to endeavour once again to open one of the doors he had before so uselessly essayed to force. The object of his search was easily regained, —but at this moment the fragant vapour which pervaded the apartment became so dense and penetrating

that Djalma, unable longer to resist its increased power, felt himself compelled to lean against the wainscot, wholly unable to move from the spot. And now a singular circumstance occurred.[1] A faint light arose in an adjoining chamber, and, gradually increasing revealed to Djalma a sort of window let into the wall, which either gave or received light from the next apartment. On the prince's side this opening was protected by an iron grating, as light as it was solid, without in the least degree obstructing the view; while, on the other side, a thick glass was let into the depth of the wall, but at the distance of two or three inches from the iron grating.

The apartment, seen through this artificial opening, appeared to Djalma, by the faint, uncertain, but soft and pleasing light, to be splendidly furnished. Between the two windows, before which hung elegantly arranged curtains of crimson silk, stood a large wardrobe, the front of which, composed entirely of glass, served admirably to reflect the whole form, as in the largest Psyche mirror. Opposite the fireplace, on which a deep red ash was alone burning, was a long and large divan, on which were piled a heap of luxurious-looking cushions. A second of time had scarcely elapsed when a female entered the apartment. It was impossible to distinguish either her figure or face, so carefully was she wrapped in a large dark mantle, of a particular form and style, the ample hood of which, thrown over the head of the wearer, effectually concealed every feature.

The sight of this mantle made Djalma start; and to the soft dreamy delight in which his senses had been steeped succeeded a feverish restlessness resembling the increasing fumes of intoxication, while his head and

[1] See the strange effects of wambay, a resinous gum, proceeding from a shrub growing in the Himalaya Mountains, — the smoke of which possesses exhilarating properties of extraordinary energy, and infinitely more powerful than that of opium, huchieh, etc. To the singular effect of this gum is attributed the species of hallucination which strikes the brain of the unhappy beings whom the "Prince of the Mountains" (or Old Man of the Mountains) is desirous of employing to carry out his own schemes of vengeance or political mischief.

ears seemed filled with a sort of hollow, booming sound, similar to that experienced by such as plunge into deep water.

Djalma continued to gaze with a sort of stupor on what was passing in the other chamber. The female who had just appeared seemed to enter with a degree of precaution almost amounting to fear; first she put aside one of the curtains, and looked with a timid and inquiring glance into the street; then slowly returned to the fireplace, where, leaning her elbow on the mantelpiece, she remained for a minute pensive and thoughtful, still concealed beneath the dark folds of her cloak. Completely mastered by the overpowering and exhilarating odour which had for the time being affected his brain, Djalma had completely forgotten both Faringhea and the circumstances which had led him to the house; and thus continued to gaze with fascinated glance upon every movement of the strange female thus singularly presented to his view, and whose movements he watched as though she were enacting a part in one of his own dreams.

Suddenly the mysterious female turned away from the fireplace, and approached the large glass-fronted wardrobe. Unfastening the clasp of her mantle, the huge covering fell from her head and whole person, and sunk in a dark mass at her feet.

Djalma remained mute and almost paralysed with amazement. Adrienne de Cardoville stood before him!

Yes; there he believed he saw her as she had looked on the previous evening, dressed precisely as she had been during her interview with the Princesse de Saint-Dizier. There was the light green silk dress, striped with pink, and ornamented with white embroidery. A network of white beads covered the knot of hair at the back of her head, and contrasted beautifully with the golden tint of her rich brown hair; there, too, was, as well as the Indian could make out amid the indistinct light

which faintly glimmered in the room, and through the iron grating which covered the glass, the slight, elegant, nymph-like form of Adrienne; her ivory shoulders; and her proud, yet graceful air, with the fair, rounded, swan-like throat; in a word, there stood Mlle. de Cardoville herself, — it was impossible to doubt her identity, and Djalma entertained not the smallest suspicion of the fact.

Large burning drops of perspiration coursed each other down the beating temples of the astonished prince; his head became dizzy; his brain swarmed with a confused idea of persons and places, as, with bloodshot gaze and heaving breath, he stood motionless, and as though bereft of all power but that of seeing.

The young female, who still stood with her back turned towards Djalma, having arranged her hair with graceful coquetry, took off the pearl netting which confined it, and laid it on the marble mantelpiece. She then appeared as though purposing to unclasp the fastening of her dress, but suddenly quitting her place before the glass, she momentarily disappeared from the eyes of Djalma, in whose ears sounded the following words, which seemed to issue from the wall of the dark chamber in which the prince remained. "She expects Agricola Baudoin, her lover!" said the mysterious speaker, while, spite of the bewilderment of the unhappy Indian, each word, each letter, seemed to burn itself into his brain and heart in characters of fire. A bloodlike mist seemed to float before his eyes — a deep groan burst from his labouring breast, though the thickness of the glass through which he was looking prevented it from being heard in the adjoining chamber, while the frantic lover wounded his hands in fruitless attempts to tear down the iron grating which hindered his rushing to the immediate presence of his perfidious mistress, reproaching her with her falsehood, and dying at her feet.

At this moment of concentrated rage and fury Djalma

observed the light, always pale and uncertain, become still fainter, as though cautiously shrouded by some person within, and then, in the midst of the vapoury gleaming which was so stealthily admitted, he saw the same form he had just lost sight of return, clad in a long and loose white muslin robe, displaying her bare neck and arms, while her long golden hair fell in rich masses down to her waist. The female continued cautiously to advance, as though directing her steps towards some door Djalma was unable to see.

At this moment, one of the entrances to the apartment in which was the prince, and which, like the window he had been gazing through, was made in the same wainscot, was gently and noiselessly opened by an invisible hand, Djalma only becoming aware of the fact by the noise made in turning the lock and the sensation of refreshment from feeling a cooler air blow on his face, for not a glimmer of light was to be seen.

The door thus left open for Djalma communicated (like one of the doors in the adjoining room, where he had seen the female) with an anteroom leading on to the staircase, up which ascending steps were distinctly heard; and, almost immediately, the sound of a person's being on the landing-place was succeeded by two distinct knocks on the outer door, while the same voice which had previously been heard said, in the midst of the darkness which enveloped the prince, "'Tis Agricola Baudoin! Listen — and behold!"

Maddened and intoxicated with blind fury, and a disturbed recollection of what had happened, yet with all the fixedness of idea and pertinacity of purpose peculiar to those whose brain is troubled either from one source or the other, Djalma drew forth the poniard he had received from Faringhea, and awaited, mute and motionless, the result of this second warning.

Scarcely had the two knocks been given than the young girl, coming forth from her chamber, in which a

faint light again streamed out, hastened to the door opening on the staircase, so that sufficient light reached the spot where Djalma had placed himself, weapon in hand, for him to see all that was going on.

Thus he distinctly perceived the female cross the antechamber and approach the entrance to the staircase, saying, in a low tone, as she reached the door:

"Who is there?"

"'Tis I — Agricola Baudoin!" replied a full, manly voice from the outside.

What follows was the work of an instant; the rapidity of thought can scarcely equal its startling impetuosity.

Scarcely had the female withdrawn the fastenings of the door, and the foot of Agricola Baudoin touched the threshold, than, springing forwards like a tiger, Djalma struck (so rapid were his blows) at the same time the unfortunate girl, who fell lifeless at his feet, and Agricola, who, though not mortally wounded, staggered, and fell beside the inanimate form of the ill-fated female.

That scene of murder, rapid in its execution as the quickest flash of lightning, had taken place in a sort of dim light, which enabled Djalma to plant his blows with fatal accuracy; but, all at once, the faint glimmering which had issued from the chamber the female had just quitted was wholly extinguished; and, in another second, Djalma felt his arm seized as in a grasp of iron, while, amid the utter darkness which prevailed, he heard the voice of Faringhea say, "You are revenged! Come — you may retreat in safety!" Bewildered, frenzied, and incapable of resistance, Djalma allowed himself to be drawn by the métis into the inner apartment, from which there were two outlets.

When Rodin, while expatiating on the wonderful combination of ideas in the human brain, had exclaimed that the word necklace had served as the germ of a fiend-like design, of which he then merely and vaguely discerned

the outline, he had by accident stumbled upon the recollection of the too notorious affair of the necklace in which, thanks to the striking resemblance she bore to the ill-fated Marie Antoinette and the being dressed like the queen, a female had, by favour of an imperfect light, so successfully enacted the part of the unfortunate queen that even the Cardinal Prince de Rohan, one of the most experienced courtiers of the day, was deceived by her, and became the dupe of the illusion. His execrable design once decided on, Rodin had despatched Jacques Dumoulin to Madame de la Sainte Colombe, without explaining to him the real import of his errand, which was confined to his inquiring of this experienced individual if she knew of a tall, handsome girl, with a profusion of golden or auburn hair. Such a female found, a costume precisely similar to that worn by Adrienne, the description of which Rodin had obtained from the Princesse de Saint-Dizier (who, it is but justice to say, was perfectly unacquainted with the diabolical scheme), completed the deception.

The rest may be easily imagined. The unfortunate representative of Adrienne had played the part allotted her, believing the whole to be merely a practical jest.

As for Agricola, his appearance may be accounted for by saying he had received a letter, praying him to attend, at a certain place and hour, when matters of the utmost consequence to Mlle. de Cardoville would be revealed to him.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE NUPTIAL COUCH.

A soft light issuing from a spherical lamp of Oriental alabaster gently illumined the sleeping apartment of Mlle. de Cardoville, displaying a large ivory bedstead, delicately inlaid with mother-of-pearl. A snow-white mass of transparent muslin and Valenciennes lace hung, in graceful folds, around the bed, which had not as yet been occupied. On the mantelpiece, of purest white marble, was placed, as usual, a large vase filled with fresh-gathered camelias, whose waxen flowers contrasted beautifully with the bright green foliage. The glowing embers that lingered on the hearth cast a rich red glow on the snow-white ermine carpet that covered the floor.

A sweet odour filled the chamber, proceeding from the adjoining bath-room, in which Adrienne's accustomed bath of perfumed water had been prepared according to evening custom. All was peaceful tranquillity within and without. Eleven o'clock in the evening had scarcely struck from the silvery pendule that proclaimed the hour to the graceful mistress of this elegant chamber, when the ivory doors opposite to those conducting to the bath-room slowly opened, and Djalma appeared. Two hours had elapsed since his commission of the double murder recorded in the last chapter, and he fully imagined he had sacrificed Adrienne to his jealous fury. The household of Mlle. de Cardoville, accustomed to Djalma's daily visits, had long since ceased to announce him, and, not having received any contrary orders from

their mistress, who was at that moment engaged in one of the salons on the ground floor, felt no surprise at the sight of the Indian.

Never before had the prince presumed to enter the sacred precincts of this apartment, but, aware of its locality, he doubted not of being enabled to find it. As Djalma entered the apartment, his features were calm and composed, owing to the powerful effort he was making over himself. The only perceptible difference in his appearance might be found in the paleness which had dimmed the rich amber of his complexion. He wore a robe of purple cashmere striped with silver, so that the blood which had sprinkled him as he plunged his dagger into his supposed rival and false mistress showed not its hideous stains.

Closing the door firmly, yet noiselessly, Djalma threw from him his turban, for it seemed as though a band of burning fire encircled his head. His raven locks hung around his pale but handsome countenance, and, folding his arms, he looked slowly around him. As his eyes rested on the bed of Adrienne, he appeared as though intending to approach it, then, suddenly stopping short, a convulsive shudder shook his frame. He passed his hand across his brows, let his head droop forwards on his breast, and remained for several moments thoughtful and motionless as a statue. After resting for some time in this attitude of deep contemplation, his thoughts took another turn, and, throwing himself on his knees, the prince seemed engaged in deep and earnest supplication; his features, bathed in tears, betrayed no violent passion. Neither hatred, despair, nor savage exultation were there to be seen. On the contrary, the predominating expression was that of acute and unaffected grief.

For several minutes tears and sobs prevented his utterance, but at length he articulated, in an agonised tone:

"Dead, dead! She who this morning reposed so peace-

fully in this very chamber! And I am her murderer! By what right did I take her life? Alas! perjured as she was, 'twas not my hand should have punished her. True, she loved another, and that other has paid for his presumption with his life. But was it her fault that she preferred my rival? No, no, it was rather mine that knew not better how to win her affections," added he, with an air of humility, that expressed also the deepest distress and remorse. "But how could I, a poor, untaught, uncivilised being, hope to gain a heart like hers? Alas! she tried to love me, but unable to requite my passion, her generous nature, unwilling to cause pain, feigned a regard she felt not, concealed her real indifference, and affected a love I was unworthy to create; and this, this she did to save me from anguish — from utter despair! And for this I killed her! Yet how nobly had she received me, a poor, shipwrecked wanderer! Did she not herself come to welcome me to her country, throw open her doors for my reception, and permit me to pass my days in her delightful society? She did — she did, and how have I requited all this goodness? What crime had she committed that my hand, covered as it was with her benefits, should have plunged a dagger in her breast? She would have returned my love, but could not compel her heart to surrender itself to one who, though idolising her beyond all earthly beings, yet came not up to the standard of excellence which alone could satisfy a mind such as she possessed; and for this involuntary offence on her part to take her life! I know not what demon urged me on. I seemed mad; but scarcely was the dreadful deed completed, than I seemed to wake as from a fearful dream; but, alas! it is no imaginary crime I have committed. She whom I so tenderly, adoringly loved and worshipped has died by my hand! And up to this wretched evening what ineffable bliss have I not enjoyed, when, seated by her side, I have revelled in long vistas of joyful years and unfading happiness!

She, too, with untiring goodness, had laboured to clear away the errors from my darkened soul, and fill it with sentiments noble and generous as those which inspired her. That at least remains," added the Indian, bursting into renewed sobs; "that blessed treasure, her own pure gift, can never be taken from me. No; this jewel of the past is all my own — no one can bereave me of that — it must henceforth be my consolation. But why do I speak of being consoled? Have I not murdered two defenceless beings — cowardly and basely slain them — without even affording them the means of defending their lives? I rushed on my unresisting victims with the savage fury of a tiger, who seizes and tears the innocent as ferociously as the guilty!"

Djalma could proceed no further. He pressed his hands to his forehead with convulsive energy. Then mastering his emotion, he said, in a voice of calmness:

"I know that I, too, must die, even as she has died; but, alas! my death will not restore her to life!" And feebly rising, Djalma drew from his belt the blood-stained poniard of Faringhea, opened the handle and took from it the crystal phial which contained the poison, then threw from him the poniard, which, as it fell on the ermine carpet, spotted its snowy whiteness with the sanguinary moisture still remaining on the bright steel.

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Djalma, tightly grasping the phial in his hand; "I, too, must die! 'Tis fit and right it should be so! Blood for blood! and my death shall avenge hers! How was it that the dagger I plunged into her heart was not turned back upon my own breast? I know not. I know but this, that she is dead, and by my hand! All that is left me is to utter my dying expressions of anguish, remorse, and unutterable affection; and then, in this holy temple, of which she was the pure, the bright, the presiding goddess, to offer up my own life in atonement. Yes," continued he, "in

this dear chamber, sanctified as it has been by her presence!"

Then again relapsing into an agony of grief, and burying his face in his hands, he exclaimed, "Dead, dead!" After some minutes he succeeded in subduing the violence of his feelings, and added, in a firm, calm tone, "Well, well; death is my only refuge! Nor need I linger long. But no; the poison I hold may be rendered either instantaneous or slow and gradual in its effects. So Faringhea informed me; for those who would die by imperceptible approaches of its fatal influence, a few drops only are needful. Then be such my death! Once assured of quitting this wretched existence, I would fain live over, in my thoughts, all the enchanting hours I have passed with her. Alas, alas! who would have thought, when we parted yesterday, so full of hope and fond affection, that this night would have witnessed —"

So saying, the prince raised the phial to his lips, and, having swallowed several drops of the fluid it contained, placed it on a small ivory table that stood beside the bed of Adrienne.

"This poison," said he, "is of a burning, acrid taste. I am now sure of death. Let me, then, feast my senses by gazing on this chamber and inhaling its sweet perfume, and then let me rest my dying head on the same pillow on which hers has so often reposed." And thus saying, Djalma sunk on his knees before the bed, pressing his burning forehead on its delicate covering.

At this moment the ivory door which communicated with the bath-room turned softly on its hinges, and Adrienne appeared, having just dismissed her attendants, after they had waited upon her toilet duties. She wore a long, white muslin dressing-gown; her hair, arranged for the night in a quantity of small plaits, formed two large bandeaux, which imparted to her lovely countenance an air of girlish simplicity, while the delicate fairness of her complexion was becomingly heightened by

the action of the perfumed tepid bath she was accustomed to plunge in before retiring to rest. Nothing could be more resplendently beautiful than the whole appearance of Adrienne, as she opened the ivory door, and placed her small and exquisitely moulded foot, thrust hastily in a slipper of white satin, upon the ermine carpet. Happiness sparkled in her eyes, and diffused itself over her air, her step, her every movement. She had overcome every difficulty as to the mode in which she desired to solemnise her marriage. All was arranged, and in two days Djalma and herself would pronounce their mutual vows; and the very thoughts of the nearness of the time when Djalma too would rank as possessor of the luxurious apartment she had destined for their nuptial chamber brought a richer glow to her cheek. The ivory door had opened so noiselessly and the steps of Adrienne fell so soundlessly on the soft fur of the carpet that Djalma, who still remained with his head pressed on the muslin draperies of the bed, had not heard her approach. But suddenly a mingled cry of terror and surprise struck on his ear. He turned abruptly around and beheld Adrienne. By an involuntary impulse the startled girl, wrapping her muslin robe more closely around her, withdrew several steps, feeling more of sorrow than anger at finding Djalma. Believing that he had been induced, during some wild burst of passion, to seek her in her chamber, she experienced extreme regret at conduct so unworthy both of him and herself, and was just about to bid him depart in a tone and manner that should express the pain his unwarrantable intrusion caused her, when she perceived the sheathless and sanguinary dagger lying almost at her feet.

At the sight of the weapon and the expression of almost stupefaction and terror which overspread the features of Djalma, who, still kneeling, continued to gaze on her in fixed amazement with eyes dilated and

arms outstretched, as though unable to believe even what he beheld, dismissing all idea of the prince's presence having originated in the motive she first assigned to it, Adrienne now felt a species of terror thrill through her veins; a dread of evil was uppermost in her thoughts, and instead of retreating from the prince she advanced towards him, saying, in an agitated voice, as she pointed to the kandjiar:

"Why are you here, prince? What has befallen you? And wherefore this dagger?"

But Djalma replied not, the presence of Adrienne had at first seemed to him the creation of a brain already disturbed and acted upon by the effects of the poison.

But when the soft voice of Adrienne reached his ear, when the sudden beating of his heart announced the sort of electric shock he experienced in now meeting the glance of her he so passionately adored, when he had contemplated that lovely face so bright, so glowingly fresh and purely innocent, tranquil even amid the extreme uneasiness she endured, Djalma perceived that he was not under the influence of a dream or vision, but that the object of his heart's devotion was there before his eyes in living loveliness.

Then, as by degrees he became more and more convinced of the identity of the figure before him with the being he had so deeply mourned; as the full delight rolled over his mind that Adrienne still existed, though wholly unable to comprehend or explain the wonder by which she was thus restored to life, the whole countenance of the Indian underwent a change; the pale, golden tint of his complexion became bright and glowing; his eyes, dimmed by remorse and tears, were again radiant with joy, while his features, so lately contracted by terror and despair, expressed every alternation of a delight that was almost the delirium of happiness, too great for mortal to endure.

Approaching Adrienne in his kneeling attitude, and extending to her his supplicating hands, too deeply affected to be able to utter a word, he gazed on her with so much astonishment, passionate tenderness, and intense gratitude, to find she still lived, that the object of his mute regard, terrified by his looks and warned also by the forebodings of her own heart, concluded with indescribable fear that some dreadful mystery lurked beneath all this.

At length Djalma, clasping his hands, exclaimed, in accents impossible to describe:

"You live? You did not then die as I thought?"

"Die?" exclaimed the bewildered girl, "what mean you?"

"Then 'twas not you I slew; thanks, thanks, to that great and good Providence that preserved you!" And in the ecstasy of this idea the unhappy prince forgot the ill-fated victim who had perished by his hand.

More and more terrified, and again directing her looks to the dagger which lay on the ground, Mlle. de Cardoville for the first time perceived it was covered with blood, — a discovery which afforded a dreadful confirmation of the words of Djalma. Almost frantically she exclaimed:

"My God! What is all this? Djalma, speak, tell me — whom have you killed? Clear up this horrible mystery, or you will drive me mad!"

"You live — I see you," replied Djalma, in a voice of mingled rapture and exultation; "yes, I have you before my eyes, lovely, pure, and spotless as ever. No, no, 'twas not you; I knew it could not have been, or the dagger raised against your life would have refused to harm you, and been plunged in my own breast."

"For the love of heaven," cried Adrienne, holding up her hands, in earnest supplication, "explain all this if you would not see me die before you! What has oc-

curred? Whom is it you have killed, and wherefore commit so horrible a deed?"

"I know not, but 'twas some female, who greatly resembled you, and there was a man also — her lover — but it was a dream — a vision of my heated brain — for, do I not behold you — and you yet mine — faithful and pure-minded as ever? Oh, yes, oh, yes, and my happiness cannot be told in words!" And again sobs of ecstatic joy interrupted the speech of the young Indian.

"No, no, 'tis no dream!" exclaimed the terrified girl, pointing with frenzied eagerness to the blood-stained kandjiar. "There is blood on this dagger — tell me, Djalma, I charge you by our love, explain the cause of this murderous weapon lying here, and why its blade bears these dreadful marks!"

"I threw the poniard there just now, when I took the poison, fancying I had killed you."

"Poison!" shrieked Adrienne, as her teeth almost rattled against each other with horror. "What poison?"

"I believed I had murdered you, and my only desire was to come here and offer up my own life as an atonement. I came hither to die."

"To die? What do I hear? Merciful God, what can this mean? Wherefore would you die? For whom — for what?" exclaimed the almost frantic girl.

"I meant to take my own life," replied Djalma, with a look of ineffable tenderness, "even as I believed I had taken yours; for that purpose I swallowed poison!"

"You!" exclaimed Adrienne, becoming paler than the whitest marble. "You poisoned?"

"Even as I have told you."

"You do not — you cannot mean what you say," cried the horror-struck girl, as though her mind could not entertain so dreadful an idea. "You are deceiving me!"

"Behold!" said the Indian, mechanically turning his

head towards the little ivory table on which sparkled the crystal phial.

By an impulse more rapid than thought itself, and almost superseding the power of volition, Adrienne flew to the table, seized the phial, and carried it to her lips.

Djalma had hitherto continued kneeling, but as his eyes followed the movements of the half frantic girl, he suddenly sprang up with one bound, and, overtaking Adrienne, tore from her grasp the phial she contrived to hold for a second or two to her eager lips.

"'Tis done!" exclaimed Adrienne, with a gloomy and triumphant smile. "I, too, have drunk of this deadly draught."

A fearful silence reigned for several minutes while the wretched pair gazed in each other's faces in mute, motionless, and blank despair.

This gloomy pause was at length broken by Adrienne, who said, in a broken and agitated voice she vainly strove to render firm and collected:

"After all, there is nothing very extraordinary in what has occurred. You have taken away life, and you wished to expiate your crime by your death, — that is but just; and I will not survive you, — that is only natural. But why do you gaze on me so intently? Tell me, dearest Djalma, is the poison we have taken as prompt in its effects as it is burning and acrid to the taste?"

But the prince replied not, with a universal shudder he looked at his hands.

Faringhea had said truly, a slight tinge of violent colour already stained the polished nails of the young Indian, showing that a slow, painless, almost imperceptible, but sure death was approaching.

Overwhelmed with despair at the thoughts of Adrienne's approaching end, Djalma felt his courage forsake him, he groaned heavily and covered his face with his hands, his knees failed to support him, and he sank on the bed beside which he was standing.

"So soon?" exclaimed the distracted and horror-stricken girl, as she threw herself on her knees at Djalma's feet, "dead already? Oh, why do you hide your face from me?"

And in her extreme terror she eagerly pulled away the hands of the Indian, and beheld his features streaming with tears.

"No, no!" replied he, amid his choking sobs, "no, death has not yet arrived, its progress is slow; the effect of this poison is gradual, though certain."

"Are you quite sure of that?" exclaimed Adrienne, with indescribable joy; then kissing the hands of Djalma with extreme tenderness, she added, "Then, since this poison is slow, why do you weep?"

"For you — for you!" said the Indian, in distracting tones.

"Think not of me," replied Adrienne, resolutely. "You have committed a fearful crime, which we shall expiate by our mutual deaths. I know not what has happened, but this I swear to you, by our fond loves, that you had no wrong to revenge. My heart was all your own; some horrible mystery is contained in this affair."

"Under a pretext so plausible that I could not refuse to credit it," replied Djalma, in a rapid and broken voice, "Faringhea succeeded in inducing me to enter a house, and when we were there he told me you had deceived me. I did not at first believe him, but afterwards a sort of confusion of ideas came over me, and directly afterwards I saw amid a sort of doubtful light yourself!"

"Me?"

"No, not you, but a female who resembled you greatly, and who was dressed precisely as I had last seen you; and my brain seemed to turn around; my recollections and ideas were no longer clear or distinct, and I fancied all I saw was reality. Then a man came, you

(as I fancied) ran to meet him, and I, mad with jealous rage, struck both the man and woman to the ground. I saw them both fall! Then the idea occurred to me of coming hither to die, and in so doing I found you again, — found you to be the cause of your death. Oh, grief, grief, too great to bear; to think that you should lose your life through me!"

And here Djalma, hitherto gifted with so remarkable an energy, burst afresh into tears and sobs, with all the weakness of a child.

At the sight of this deep and impassioned despair, Adrienne, filled with that admirable courage women alone possess where their fondest affections are concerned, forgot her own wretchedness, and thought only of consoling Djalma by an effort of almost superhuman passion. As the devoted girl listened to this account, which so clearly proved the fiendish plots that had been formed against their happiness, the countenance of Adrienne became so radiant with tenderness, love, and exulting happiness, that Djalma gazed on her with fear and wonder, dreading lest her brain were affected, and that she had lost her reason.

"No more tears, my adored one," exclaimed the young girl, radiant with happiness; "no more tears, but smiles of joy and love; be assured our fierce enemies shall not triumph over us!"

"What do you mean?"

"They would render us wretched; let us pity them, for our happiness shall be the envy of the world."

"Adrienne, calm yourself!"

"I am calm — I am rational. Listen to me, dearest; now I understand all. Falling into the snare which these wretches have spread for you, you have killed! In this country this is a murder; and that is infamy or the scaffold; and to-morrow, or even this very night, you would have been thrown into prison, and thus our enemies have said, 'A man like Prince Djalma will not

"'OH, HOW I LOVE YOU.'"

await infamy on the scaffold, but will kill himself; a woman like Adrienne de Cardoville will not survive the infamy or death of her lover, she will kill herself or die of despair. Thus a fearful death for him, a fearful death for her, — and for us,' as these black-gowned men have said, 'the enormous inheritance we covet.'"

"But for you, so young, so lovely, so pure, death is terrible; and these monsters triumph!" exclaimed Djalma. "They will have spoken the truth."

"They will have lied," cried Adrienne; "our death shall be celestial, glorious, for this poison is slow, and, Djalma, I love you!"

And as Adrienne said this, she approached so closely to Djalma that their breath mingled.

At this the Indian started, and a devouring flame lighted up his countenance, his blood boiled in his veins. He forgot all, — his despair, his approaching death, — and his features, like those of Adrienne, were resplendent with beauty.

"Oh, how I love you, my adored husband!" said Adrienne. "How often have the thoughts of you almost bereft me of reason, whilst awaiting the moment when I should be yours, and yours only! You see Heaven decrees that I should be yours, and yours only, and nothing can now divide us, for, this very morning, the holy man who was in two days to have blessed our union has received from me a royal gift, which must for ever put joy in the hearts and faces of many unfortunate creatures. What, then, can we regret? Our immortal souls will exhale in our sighs of mutual love, and mount to that adorable God who is all love."

"Adrienne! —"

"Djalma! —"

Two hours after this, Adrienne and Djalma breathed their last sigh in each other's arms.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A RENCONTRE.

ADRIENNE and Djalma died on the thirtieth of May.

The following scene occurred on the thirty-first of the same month, on the eve of the day appointed for the final meeting of the heirs of Marius de Rennepont.

It will no doubt be remembered that the apartments which M. Hardy had occupied in the *maison de retraite* of the right reverend fathers in the Rue de Vangirard were sombre and isolated, the remotest chamber having access to a small garden planted with yews, and surrounded with lofty walls. To arrive at this farther room it was requisite to traverse two large apartments, whose doors, when closed, prevented all noise from being heard as well as all communication from without.

During the last two or three days Père d'Aigrigny had occupied this apartment. He had not selected it, but had been induced to remain there after certain plausible reasons which the reverend *père* the steward had advanced on the instigation of Rodin.

It was about noon.

Père d'Aigrigny, seated in an armchair near the glass door which looked into the dull little garden, was reading the following in a Paris newspaper:

"Eleven o'clock P.M. An event, as horrible as tragical, has thrown alarm throughout the whole of the Quartier Richelieu. A double assassination has been committed on a young girl and a young artisan. The young girl was killed by the blow of a dagger, but it is hoped that

the young artisan will be saved. This crime is attributed to jealousy. Justice has taken cognisance of the facts. Particulars to-morrow."

After having read this, Père d'Aigrigny threw the journal on the table, and meditated deeply.

"It is incredible!" he said, with bitter envy, as he thought of Rodin; "yet he has reached the desired goal; scarcely one of his anticipations has failed. This family has been destroyed by merely playing with their passions, good or bad, which he has artfully called into motion. He said so! Yes, I confess it," added Père d'Aigrigny, with a jealous and hateful smile. "Père Rodin is a dissembling, crafty, patient, energetic, opinionated, and wonderfully intelligent being. Who would have said, some months since, when he was writing under my orders, a humble and discreet *socius*, that this man had already and for so long a time possessed the most daring, most unbounded ambition; that he dared to throw his eyes even to the holy seat; and that by intrigues, marvellously plotted, and corruption, followed up with wonderful skill, in the very heart of the holy college, this aim was not unreasonable; and that, perhaps soon, this hellish ambition might have been gratified, had not the secret workings of this wonderfully dangerous man been watched unknown to him, as I have now learnt. Ah!" continued Père d'Aigrigny, with a smile of bitter but exulting irony; "ah, you foul being! you would have played Sixtus Quintus, eh? And, not content with this bold daring, you would, had you been successful, have annulled, absorbed our Company into your papacy, as the Sultan has absorbed the janissaries. Ah, were men but your ambitious footstool! Oh, you have bent, humiliated, crushed me beneath your insolent disdain! Patience!" added D'Aigrigny, with repressed joy. "Patience! the day of retribution is at hand; I alone am the depositary of the will of our general. Père Caboccini, sent here as a *socius*, is himself ignorant of

it. Thus, then, the fate of Père Rodin is in my hands, and he little anticipates what is in store for him. In this Rennepont affair, which he has so admirably handled, I recognise him; he thinks to surpass us, and that he has succeeded for himself alone, but to-morrow —"

Père d'Aigrigny was suddenly aroused from these agreeable reflections by hearing the doors, which led to the apartment in which he was, open. At the instant when he turned his head to see who entered, the door opened. He made a gesture of surprise, and turned very red.

The Maréchal Simon was before him.

And behind him in the shade D'Aigrigny saw the cadaverous countenance of Rodin, who, having cast on D'Aigrigny a look full of fiendish joy, suddenly disappeared; and the door shutting, D'Aigrigny and Maréchal Simon were alone.

The father of Rose and Blanche was not recognisable; his gray hair had turned perfectly white; on his pale, marble, wan cheeks was a rugged beard unshaven for many days; his eyes, hollow, red, glaring, and restless, were savage and haggard; he was wrapped in a large cloak, with his black cravat carelessly tied around his throat.

Rodin, as he quitted the room, had (inadvertently) double-locked the door.

When he was alone with the Jesuit, the maréchal suddenly let fall his cloak from his shoulders, and Père d'Aigrigny saw in a silk handkerchief, which served the father of Rose and Blanche as a belt, two swords, bare and keen-edged.

D'Aigrigny instantly comprehended all.

He remembered that a few days before Rodin had obstinately inquired what he would do if the maréchal struck him on the cheek. He no longer doubted; and the Père d'Aigrigny, who believed that he held in his hands the destiny of Rodin, was now ensnared, and left

by him without possibility of escape, for he knew that the two other rooms were shut up, and that there was no possibility of making himself heard without by any cries for help, as the high walls of the garden were surrounded by waste grounds.

His first thought — and by no means improbable — was, that Rodin, either by his agents at Rome or by his subtle penetration, having discovered that his fate was about to depend entirely on D'Aigrigny, hoped to get rid of him by thus handing him over to the inexorable vengeance of the father of Rose and Blanche.

The maréchal, still keeping silence, unfastened the handkerchief that served him as a belt, laid the two swords on a table, and, crossing his arms over his chest, advanced slowly towards the Père d'Aigrigny.

Thus were they face to face, — those two men, who, during all their lives as soldiers, had pursued each other with implacable hatred, and who, after having fought in opposite camps, had already met in a fierce and sanguinary duel; these two men, one of whom had come now to the other to call him to account for the death of his children.

On the maréchal's approach Père d'Aigrigny rose. He wore a black cassock, which made him look still paler, as the redness at first caused fled from his cheeks.

For some seconds these two men were standing erect face to face, neither uttering a word.

The maréchal was fearful in his paternal despair; his calmness, as inexorable as fate, was more terrible than the fiercest outbursts of anger.

"My children are dead," he said at length to the Jesuit, in a slow, hollow voice, and first breaking silence, "and I must kill you!"

"Sir," cried D'Aigrigny, "listen to me; do not believe —"

"I must kill you," repeated the maréchal, interrupting the Jesuit; "your hate pursued my wife to exile, where

she perished; you and your accomplices sent my children to a certain death. For twenty years you have been my evil demon; it is enough, I seek your life, and I will have it."

"My life belongs first to God," replied D'Aigrigny, piously, "and afterwards to him who seeks to take it."

"We will fight to death in this chamber," said the maréchal; "and as I have to avenge my wife and children, I am calm, you see."

"Sir," replied Père d'Aigrigny, calmly, "you forget that my profession prevents me from fighting. Formerly I could have accepted the duel you offer, but now my position has altered."

"Ah," inquired the maréchal, with a sneer, "you refuse to fight now because you are a priest?"

"Yes, sir, because I am a priest."

"So, then, because a scoundrel as you are is a priest he is certain of impunity, and he may cover his cowardice and crimes with his black gown?"

"I do not understand one word of your accusation, sir. Under any circumstances you have the law to resort to," added D'Aigrigny, biting his lips, pale with rage, for he felt deeply the insult which the maréchal had addressed to him; "if you have any cause of complaint address yourself to justice, it is impartial to all."

Maréchal Simon shrugged his shoulders with fierce disdain.

"Your crimes escape the law; and if I did not punish them the world would not avenge me. After all the ill you have done me, — after all you have snatched from me —" and at the remembrance of his children the maréchal's voice faltered, but he soon resumed his original calmness; "you must see that I live for vengeance only, and a vengeance in which I can glory, when I feel your cowardly heart beating at my sword's point. Our last duel was but child's play, but this — you will see — you will see!"

And the maréchal went towards the table whereupon he had deposited the swords.

Père d'Aigrigny required all his self-control to restrain himself. The implacable hatred he had always felt towards Maréchal Simon, his insulting provocations, aroused within him a thousand fierce sentiments, yet still he maintained a command over himself as he answered:

"For the last time, sir, I repeat that the character with which I am invested prevents me from fighting you."

"Then you refuse?" said the maréchal, turning around, and advancing towards him.

"I refuse."

"Positively?"

"Positively; nothing shall force me."

"Nothing?"

"No, sir, nothing."

"We shall see," said the maréchal.

And his hand slapped D'Aigrigny full on the cheek.

The Jesuit uttered a cry of rage. All his blood mounted to his face so rudely buffeted. All his courage — for he was a brave man — was recalled; his old soldierly valour revived in spite of himself, and, with clenched teeth, clasped hands, he started violently, and exclaimed, "The swords, the swords!"

But he suddenly remembered Rodin's appearance and the deep interest he had in inducing this rencontre, and he extracted from his desire to escape the diabolical snare, laid for him by his former *socius*, the courage to restrain his burning resentment.

To the momentary excitement of Père d'Aigrigny there suddenly succeeded a calm filled with regret; and, desirous of playing his part to the end, he went on his knees, and, bowing his head, struck his breast with an air of contrition, saying, "Forgive me, Lord, for having given way to an impulse of anger, and, above all, forgive him who has outraged me."

In spite of his apparent resignation, the Jesuit's voice was deeply affected; he seemed to feel a fever in his cheeks; for the first time in his life — his life, as soldier or priest — he had undergone such an insult. He had thrown himself on his knees, as much from mummery as in order to avoid the look of the maréchal, fearing if he encountered it that he might not be able to answer for himself, but should give way to his impetuosity and resentment.

When the maréchal saw the Jesuit fall on his knees, and heard his invocation, he shook with indignation, and, grasping one of the swords in his hand, cried:

"Rise, hypocrite, scoundrel! Rise instantly!"

And the maréchal pushed the Jesuit violently with the toe of his boot.

At this fresh insult the Père d'Aigrigny sprung up as if moved by a steel spring. This was too much, and beyond all endurance. Excited, blind with rage, he rushed to the table on which the other sword was, and exclaimed, as he ground his teeth:

"Ah, you require blood! Well, blood — and your own, if so I may —"

And the Jesuit, in all the vigour of manhood, his face purple with passion, his large eyes sparkling with hate, placed himself on guard with the skill and ease of a practised swordsman.

"At last!" exclaimed the maréchal, preparing to cross swords.

But reflection came again to calm the headlong rage of D'Aigrigny. He remembered, again, that the chances of the duel would be everything for Rodin, whose destiny he held in his hands, and whom he, in his turn, should now overwhelm; and whom he detested perhaps even still more than the maréchal, although he felt within himself a secret hope of being the victor in this combat, for he felt himself full of strength and health, whilst heavy griefs had borne down the Maréchal Simon.

The Jesuit grew calm, and, to the great amazement of the maréchal, lowered the point of his sword, saying:

"I am a minister of the Lord, and ought not to shed blood. Once, again, forgive my excitement, Lord, and forgive also my brother who hath stirred up my wrath."

Then instantly placing the blade of the sword beneath his heel, he bent it up suddenly towards him, so that the weapon was broken in two pieces. There was thus no further possibility of a duel.

Père d'Aigrigny had rendered himself powerless to yield to fresh violence, to whose imminence and danger he was fully alive. Maréchal Simon remained for a moment mute and motionless with surprise and indignation, for he also saw at once the impossibility of the duel; but suddenly, in imitation of the Jesuit, the maréchal placed the blade of his weapon beneath his heel, and breaking it nearly in equal halves took up the pointed end, about eighteen inches long, took off his black silk cravat, rolled it around the fragment towards the broken end, and having thus suddenly armed himself with a dagger, he said to Père d'Aigrigny:

"Now then for poniards!"

Aghast at such coolness and such determination, Père d'Aigrigny exclaimed:

"This is a suggestion of hell itself!"

"No, it is but a father whose children have been murdered," said the maréchal, in a gloomy tone, and clutching the dagger more firmly in his hand, whilst a tear trickled to his eyes, which in an instant became again fierce and glaring.

The Jesuit saw the tear. There was in this mixture of vindictive hatred and paternal grief something so terrible, so sacred, and so menacing, that for the first time in his life D'Aigrigny experienced a sensation of fear — base, cowardly fear — fear for his life. Whilst it was only a question of a duel with swords, in which stratagem, skill, and experience are such powerful aux-

iliaries of courage, he had but to repress the impulses of his fury and hate; but before this encounter of body to body, heart to heart, he trembled for a moment, turned pale, and cried, "A butchery with knives! Never!"

The accents, the countenance of the Jesuit betrayed his feelings, his alarm, so decidedly, that the maréchal was struck by it, and he exclaimed with agony, dreading lest his vengeance should escape him:

"Is he, then, really a coward? This wretch, then, had only the courage of a fencer, or of his pride, — this miserable renegade, this traitor to his country, whom I have buffeted and kicked — for I have buffeted and kicked you, marquis of ancient descent! You, the shame of your house, the shame of all brave men, modern or ancient! Ah, so then it is not from hypocrisy or calculation, as I believed, that you refuse to fight, but from fear! Ah, you needed, then, the noise of battle or the eyes of seconds in a duel to give you courage?"

"Take care, sir!" replied D'Aigrigny, stammering, and with his teeth set, for, at this contemptuous language, passion and hatred made him forget his fear.

"Must I, then, spit in your face, in order to summon thither all the blood left in your veins?" cried the maréchal, in his exasperation.

"Oh, this is too much, — too much!" said the Jesuit. And he hastily picked up the piece of the trenchant blade which was at his feet, repeating, as he did so, "This is too much!"

"It is not enough," said the maréchal, in a breathless voice; "there, Judas!" and he spat in his face. "And if you will not fight, now," added the maréchal, "I will break your skull with the chair, infamous assassin of my children!"

Père d'Aigrigny, on receiving this, the last outrage which a man already grossly insulted can receive, forgot his interests, his resolution, his fear, — forgot even Rodin,

— he felt only the longing of unbridled revenge, and his courage again returned; instead of dreading this struggle, he joyfully compared his vigorous frame to the feeble appearance of the maréchal, almost worn down by grief; for in such a combat — a brutal, savage, body-to-body combat — physical strength is an immense advantage.

In an instant D'Aigrigny had rolled his handkerchief around the sword-blade he picked up, and rushed on Maréchal Simon, who received his attack with intrepidity.

During the whole time that this unequal struggle lasted (for the maréchal had been for several days a prey to severe fever, which had weakened his frame) the two opponents, mute and sanguinary, did not utter a word or a cry. Had any person been present at this horrible scene, it would have been impossible to have known how, when, and where the blows were given. They would have seen two fearful, livid, convulsive heads stoop, rise again, or thrown back as the fierce contest proceeded; arms stiffen like bars of iron, or twist like snakes; and then, between the rapid undulation of the maréchal's blue frock coat and the Jesuit's black cassock, something glare and glitter at rapid intervals, like a blade of steel, — would have heard a heavy, dull trampling, or from time to time a deep and oppressed breathing.

At the end of not more than two minutes the two adversaries fell, and rolled over each other.

One of them — it was D'Aigrigny — making a violent effort, contrived to disengage himself from the arms that enclasped him, and raised himself on his knees. His arms fell useless by his side, and at the moment the expiring voice of the maréchal murmured these words, "My children! Dagobert!" "I have killed him!" uttered D'Aigrigny, in a feeble voice, "but I feel that I, too, am wounded mortally!"

And resting one hand on the ground, the Jesuit raised

the other to his breast. His cassock was slashed with cuts, but the blades they had used being triangular, and very sharp, the blood, instead of flowing outwardly, was absorbed within.

"Oh, I am dying! I choke!" said Père d'Aigrigny, whose convulsed features already announced the approaches of death.

At this moment the key turned twice in the lock with some noise, and Rodin, appearing at the threshold, thrust in his head, saying, in a humble tone and with a discreet air:

"May one come in?"

At such fearful sarcasm Père d'Aigrigny made a movement as if to rush at Rodin, but fell on one hand, uttering a horrid groan. The blood was choking him.

"Ah, monster of hell!" he murmured, throwing a look of fearful rage and agony at Rodin; "it is you who are the cause of my death."

"I always told you, my very dear father, that the old leaven of the horse-trooper in you would be injurious to you," replied Rodin, with a demon's sneer. "It was only a few days back that I so warned you, advising you to allow yourself to be quietly buffeted by this swordsman, who will, however, never handle sword again; and it is rightly so, because, in the first place, 'He who draws the sword perishes by the sword,' says the Scripture. And then, in the next place, the Maréchal Simon would have inherited in right of his daughters. What would you have had me do, my very dear father? It was absolutely necessary to sacrifice you to the common interest, and the more so as I knew what you had in store for me to-morrow. But I am too old a bird to be caught."

"Before I die," said Père d'Aigrigny, in a faint voice, "I will unmask you!"

"No, no; no such thing," said Rodin, shaking his head with a crafty air, "no, I tell you. I will confess you myself, if you desire it."

"Oh, how this alarms me!" murmured Père d'Aigrigny, whose eyelids were gradually closing; "may God have mercy upon me, if it be not too late. Alas! I am at this my last moment! I am — very guilty!"

"And, moreover, a great noodle," said Rodin, with a shrug of his shoulders, as he gazed on the agony of his accomplice with calm contempt.

Père d'Aigrigny had but a very few more moments to live, and Rodin, perceiving this, said to himself:

"It is time now to call for help."

And this the Jesuit then began to do, running into the other apartments aghast, alarmed.

Persons came at his cries.

But as we have said, Rodin only quitted the Père d'Aigrigny at the moment when he was breathing his last sigh.

That same evening, in his own chamber, by the light of a small lamp, Rodin was plunged in a kind of ecstatic contemplation in presence of the engraving representing Sixtus Quintus.

Midnight struck slowly by the large clock of the house.

When the last sounds had vibrated Rodin stood erect, in all the savage majesty of his infernal triumph, and exclaimed:

"It is the first of June! — there is no longer a living Rennepont! Methinks I hear St. Peter's at Rome striking the hour!"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE MESSAGE.

Whilst Rodin remained plunged in ambitious ecstasy in contemplation of the portrait of Sixtus Quintus, the good little Père Caboccini, whose warm and indefatigable embraces had so much annoyed Rodin, had gone mysteriously in search of Faringhea, and, presenting to him a portion of an ivory crucifix, said to him only these words, with his usual complaisance and easy air:

"His Excellency the Cardinal Malipieri, when I quitted Rome, charged me to convey this to you on this day, the thirty-first of May."

The métis, who seldom evinced emotion, started suddenly, almost painfully; his features became gloomy, and, fixing on the little one-eyed father a piercing look, he replied:

"You have still some other words to say to me?"

"True," replied Caboccini, "and they are these, 'There's many a slip betwixt the cup and lip.'"

"'Tis well," said the métis; and, heaving a deep sigh, he fitted the fragment of the ivory crucifix with that he had already in his possession, and it matched precisely.

Père Caboccini looked at him with curiosity, for the cardinal had told him no more than to hand this piece of ivory to Faringhea, and say the words he had uttered, in order to prove the authenticity of his mission; and the reverend father, very much mystified, said to the métis:

"And what are you going to do with the crucifix now it is complete?"

"Nothing," said Faringhea, still absorbed in painful meditation.

"Nothing?" asked the reverend father, much astonished. "Then what was the use of bringing it to you from so great a distance?"

Without satisfying his curiosity, the métis said to him:

"At what hour to-morrow does the Reverend Father Rodin go to the Rue St. François?"

"Very early."

"Before he goes out he will go to the chapel to say his prayers?"

"Yes, according to the custom of our reverend fathers."

"You sleep near him?"

"As his *socius* I occupy a chamber close to his."

"It may be," said Faringhea, after a moment's silence, "that the reverend father, absorbed by the great interests which occupy him, may forget to go to the chapel — remind him of this pious duty."

"I will not fail."

"No, do not fail!" said Faringhea, with emphasis.

"Make your mind easy," said the worthy little *père;* "I see you are interested in his welfare."

"Very much."

"Such interest is praiseworthy; continue thus, and you may one day belong to our Society," said Père Caboccini, with earnestness.

"I am as yet but a poor auxiliary and affiliated member," said Faringhea, humbly; "but there is not one more devoted — soul, body, and mind — than myself to the Society," added the métis, with gloomy enthusiasm. "Bohwanie is nothing compared to it!"

"Bohwanie! Who is that, my good friend?"

"Bohwanie makes carcasses which rot, and the holy Society makes carcasses which progress."

"Ah, yes, — *Perinde ac cadaver*, these were the last words of our great St. Ignatius de Loyola. But who is Bohwanie?"

"Bohwanie is to the holy Society what the child is to the man," replied the métis, more and more excited. "Glory to the Company — glory! If my father was its enemy, I would strike my father. The man whose genius should inspire me with the greatest admiration, respect, and terror might be its enemy, yet would I strike that man, in spite of the admiration, respect, and terror with which he would inspire me," said the métis, with an effort; and then, after a moment's silence, he added, looking the Père Caboccini in the face, "I speak thus that you may repeat my words to Cardinal Malipieri, begging him to report them — to — "

Faringhea paused suddenly.

"To whom would you that the cardinal reported your words?"

"He knows," said the métis, abruptly. "Good night."

"Good night, my worthy friend; I can but commend your sentiments towards our holy Company. Alas! she has need of energetic defenders, for they do say that traitors have glided into her bosom."

"For such," replied Faringhea, "we should be wholly without pity."

"Without pity!" said the good little father; "we understand each other."

"Perhaps," said the métis. "But be sure you do not forget to remind the Reverend Father Rodin to go to the chapel before he leaves in the morning."

"I will not fail," said the Reverend Father Caboccini.

And the two men separated.

When he returned to his apartment the Père Caboccini learned that a courier, arrived from Rome that night, had brought despatches to Rodin.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE FIRST OF JUNE.

THE chapel in the house of the reverend fathers in the Rue de Vangirard was very prettily fitted up. Large stained glass windows threw over it a mysterious twilight, the altar sparkled with gilding and ornament, and at the door of this little church, under the organ, in a dark recess, was a large holy water font, richly sculptured.

It was near this font, in an obscure corner, in which he could hardly be distinguished, that Faringhea came to kneel on the first of June, very early, as soon as the chapel doors were opened.

The métis was greatly dejected, from time to time he shuddered and sighed, as if repressing the agitations of a violent internal struggle. That savage and untamable soul, this monomaniac, possessed by the genius of evil and destruction, experienced, as may be supposed, a deep admiration for Rodin, who exercised over him a kind of magnetic fascination. The métis, a brute beast, ferocious in his intelligence, and with human features, saw in the infernal genius of Rodin something superhuman. And Rodin, too penetrating not to be certain of the savage devotion of this wretch, had, as we have seen, made fruitful use of him in the tragic termination of the loves of Adrienne and Djalma. What excited, to an incredible point, Faringhea's admiration, was all he knew or could comprehend of the Society of Jesus. This immense occult power, which undermined

the world by its subterranean ramifications, and attained its ends by diabolical means, had struck the métis with the most savage enthusiasm. And if anything in the world surpassed his fanatic admiration of Rodin, it was his blind devotion for the company of Ignatius Loyola, who made the "dead to advance," as the métis expressed it.

Faringhea, concealed in the recess of the chapel, was reflecting deeply when steps were heard, and Rodin appeared, accompanied by his *socius*, the good little one-eyed father.

Whether from abstraction, or that the shadows projected by the organ did not allow him to see the métis, Rodin dipped his fingers in the holy water font, near which Faringhea was, without perceiving him, as motionless as a statue; he felt the cold damp flow from his brow, so greatly was he excited.

Rodin's prayer was short, as may be believed, for he was in haste to go to the Rue St. François. After having (as did the Père Caboccini) knelt for some moments, he arose, bowed reverentially to the choir, and went towards the door, followed a few paces off by his *socius*.

At the moment when Rodin approached the holy water font he saw the métis, whose tall figure was visible in the deep shadow in which he had until this moment remained. Faringhea, advancing a little, bowed respectfully to Rodin, who said to him, in a low voice and with an abstracted air:

"By and by — at two o'clock — at my residence."

And thus saying, Rodin stretched out his arm in order to dip his hand in the *bénitier;* but the métis saved him this trouble, by presenting hastily the brush (called the *goupillon*), which usually remains in the holy water.

Squeezing in his dirty fingers the moistened hairs of the *goupillon*, which the métis held by the handle, Rodin

imbibed sufficient on his thumb and forefinger, and raised them to his forehead, where, according to custom, he traced the sign of the cross; he then opened the chapel door and went out, after having turned around and again said to Faringhea:

"At two o'clock, at my residence."

Thinking that he might avail himself of the *goupillon* which Faringhea, motionless, aghast, still held out with a trembling and agitated hand, the Père Caboccini thrust his finger towards the métis; but he (desirous, perhaps, to confine his attention to Rodin) withdrew the brush hastily, and the Père Caboccini, frustrated in his attempt, followed Rodin precipitately, as he dared not on this day lose sight of him for a moment, and entered with him into the hackney-coach, which led them to the Rue St. François.

It is impossible to depict the look which the métis threw on Rodin at the moment when the latter quitted the chapel.

Left alone in the holy place, Faringhea sank down, and falling half kneeling, half crouching, on the pavement, hid his face in his hands.

As the vehicle approached the Quartier du Marius, where the house of Marius de Rennepont was, the feverish agitation, the devouring impatience of triumph, was to be read in Rodin's countenance. Two or three times, opening his pocketbook, he read and arranged the different acts or attestations of the deaths of the members of the Rennepont family, and from time to time thrust his head out of the window with anxiety, as though he would hasten the slow motion of the vehicle.

The good little *père*, his *socius*, never took his eyes from him, and his look had an expression as crafty as peculiar.

At length the carriage, entering the Rue St. François, stopped before the iron door of the old house,

which had been so recently opened after having been closed for a century and a half.

Rodin sprung from the hackney-coach as agile as a young man, and knocked violently at the door, whilst the Père Caboccini, less nimble, alighted more cautiously.

There was no answer to the resounding strokes of the knocker which Rodin gave.

Trembling with anxiety, he again knocked, and, listening attentively, heard the approach of slow and dragging footsteps; but they paused some paces from the door, which did not open.

"It is being roasted alive on burning coals," said Rodin, for his breast seemed on fire with anxiety. After having again knocked at the door he began to bite his nails, according to his usual custom.

Suddenly the door turned on its hinges, and Samuel, the guardian Jew, appeared under the portico.

The old man's features expressed the bitterest grief; on his venerable cheeks was still visible the trace of recent tears, which his tremulous and aged hands endeavoured to wipe away, as he opened the door to Rodin.

"Who are you, gentlemen?" inquired Samuel of Rodin.

"I am the agent charged with the powers and procurations of the Abbé Gabriel, the sole surviving heir of the Rennepont family," replied Rodin, in a hurried tone. "This gentleman is my secretary," he added, pointing to the Père Caboccini, who bowed.

After having looked attentively at Rodin, Samuel replied:

"Yes, I remember. Be so good as to follow me, sir." And the old guardian turned towards the building in the garden, motioning the two reverend fathers to follow him.

"This cursed old man has so irritated me by keeping me at the door," said Rodin, in a low voice, to his *socius*,

"that I feel as if I had a fever. My lips and throat are as dry and burning as parchment shrivelled in the fire."

"Won't you take something, good father, dear father? Let me ask for a glass of water from this man," replied the one-eyed Jesuit, with tender solicitude.

"No, no," said Rodin, "it is nothing. My impatience fevers me, that's all."

Pale and disconsolate, Bathsheba, Samuel's wife, was standing at the door of the lodge they occupied, and which was under the portico of the *porte cochère*, when the Israelite went towards her, and said, in Hebrew:

"And the curtains of the chamber of mourning?"

"Are closed."

"And the iron chest?"

"Is prepared," replied Bathsheba, still speaking Hebrew.

After having pronounced these words, completely unintelligible to Rodin and the Père Caboccini, Samuel and Bathsheba, in spite of the misery so apparent in their countenances, exchanged a kind of peculiar and sinister smile.

Then Samuel, preceding the two reverend fathers, went up the steps and entered the vestibule, where a lamp was burning. Rodin, who had a good memory for localities, went towards the red salon, where the first meeting of the heirs had taken place, when Samuel stopped him, saying:

"That is not the way to go."

Then taking the lamp, he turned towards a dark staircase, for the windows of the house had not been opened.

"But," said Rodin, "the last time we met in the salon on the ground floor."

"To-day we meet above," replied Samuel.

And he ascended the stairs slowly.

"Where? where above?" inquired Rodin, as he followed him.

"In the chamber of mourning," said the Israelite, still ascending the stairs.

"And what is the chamber of mourning?" inquired Rodin, surprised.

"A place of tears and death," replied the Jew, and he still mounted the stairs through darkness which the small lamp hardly dissipated.

"But," said Rodin, more and more surprised, and stopping short, "why go to this place?"

"The money is there," replied Samuel.

And he still ascended.

"The money is there! Oh, that's another thing!" answered Rodin.

And he hastened to regain the steps he had lost by his delay.

Samuel went higher, higher. Having attained a certain height, the staircase made an abrupt elbow, and the two Jesuits could see, by the pale ray of the little lamp, and in the void left between the iron balustrade and the arched roof, the profile of the old Israelite, who, in advance of them, was ascending the stairs with difficulty, and by the aid of the iron baluster.

Rodin was struck with the expression of Samuel's physiognomy. His black eyes, usually mild and veiled by age, shone with singular brilliancy. His features, still stamped with sorrow, intelligence, and goodness, seemed to contract, harden, and with his thin lips he smiled strangely.

"It is not extremely high," observed Rodin, in a low tone, to Père Caboccini, "and yet my legs quite fail me. I am completely out of breath, and my temples beat as if they would burst."

And Rodin panted for breath; but the worthy little Père Caboccini, usually so full of tender care for his companion, made no reply, but appeared as if much preoccupied.

"Shall we soon reach the place?" asked Rodin of Samuel, in an impatient tone.

"We have arrived," replied Samuel.

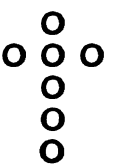
"At last! Well, that is fortunate!" was Rodin's remark.

"Very fortunate," responded the Israelite.

And standing aside on the corridor, whither he had preceded Rodin, he pointed, with the hand in which he held the lamp, to a large door from which proceeded a pale light.

Rodin, in spite of his increasing surprise, entered boldly, followed by Père Caboccini and Samuel.

The chamber in which these three persons now found themselves was very large, and only received its light from a square *belvéder;* but the glass on four sides of this sort of lanthorn disappeared beneath sheets of lead, pierced each with seven holes, forming the cross.



Thus the daylight could only penetrate this apartment by these punctured crosses, and the obscurity would have been entire but for a lamp which was burning on a large and massive console of black marble, which was placed against one of the walls. It might, indeed, be called a funereal apartment, for throughout there was nothing but black draperies or black curtains fringed with white. There was no other piece of furniture there but the console of marble we have mentioned.

On this console was an iron casket of the style and construction of the seventeenth century, admirably forged of open work — a real lace of steel.

Samuel, addressing Rodin, who was wiping his brows

him with his dirty pocket-handkerchief, and looking about much astonished, but by no means alarmed, said to him:

"The wishes of the testator, however strange, are sacred for me, and with your leave I will accomplish them all."

"Nothing more just," replied Rodin; "but what are we going to do here?"

"You will know directly, monsieur. You appear here as the representative of the sole remaining heir of the Rennepont family, M. l'Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, do you not?"

"I do; and here are my credentials," answered Rodin.

"To save time," resumed Samuel, "while we are waiting the presence of the attesting magistrate, I will just go over with you the amount of accumulated property belonging to the Rennepont family, which I but yesterday withdrew from the Bank of France."

"Ah!" exclaimed Rodin, springing forwards to seize the casket, "the money is there — is it?"

"It is," said Samuel. "Here is my account — your secretary will call over the sums, and I will produce the corresponding value as he names them. After which the whole will be replaced in the casket, which I shall deliver up to you in the presence of a magistrate."

"Nothing can be better or more businesslike," said Rodin.

Samuel then placed a small ledger in the hands of Caboccini, and, approaching the iron casket, touched a spring unperceived by Rodin, and immediately the solid lid flew open and displayed a mass of notes and papers.

Caboccini then, by Samuel's directions, began reading aloud the inventory of values contained in the casket, the Jew verifying each amount by handing to Rodin a bank bill of corresponding value, which, after due examination and close scrutiny on the part of the Jesuit, was by him returned to Samuel, who carefully replaced each precious document in the box.

This affair, important as it was, took up but a short space, for these immense sums were all comprised in eight vouchers, 500,000 francs in bank-notes, 35,000 francs in gold, and 250 francs in silver, odd money — making a total of 212,175,000 francs.[1]

As Rodin finished counting the last of the five hundred bank-notes, each of the value of one thousand francs, he said, as he returned it to Samuel:

"All is correct, and the total as you say, two hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs!"

Doubtless the sight of such riches within his immediate grasp was too much for his senses to endure, for a species of giddiness seized his brain, his breathing became short, and a mist seemed to dance before his eyes. So powerfully was he affected that he became quite unable to support himself, and, taking the arm of Caboccini, he said, in an agitated tone and manner:

"It is strange I should be thus overcome. I thought my nerves were stronger; but what I experience is unlike anything I ever felt in my life."

And so fearfully was the natural lividness of Rodin's cadaverous countenance increased, so severe, with the convulsive spasms which seemed to rack his frame, that poor, fat, little Father Caboccini, while striving his utmost to sustain him, exclaimed, with alarm:

"My dear, worthy father, pray try and recover yourself — let not the intoxication of success carry you away to this extent!"

While the one-eyed *socius* was thus lavishing his solicitous cares on Rodin, Samuel had been occupied in

[1] The eight vouchers were for 2,000,000 francs in the French funds, at 5 per cent., payable to the bearer; 900,000 francs in the 3 per cents., also payable to bearer; 5,000 Bank shares, payable to bearer; 3,000 shares in the 4 canals, payable at sight; 125,000 ducats in the Neapolitan funds, payable to bearer; 3,000 metalliques of Austria, payable to bearer; 75,000 livres sterling in the 3 per cent. English funds, payable to bearer; 1,200,000 Dutch florins, payable to bearer; 28,360,000 of florins in the funds of the Low Countries, payable, like all the preceding, to the bearer.

replacing the list of monies, cash, and other valuables in the iron box.

The unconquerable energy of Rodin's character, aided by the indescribable joy he experienced at finding himself on the very verge of attaining an object so ardently desired and eagerly pursued, enabled him to surmount his severe sufferings, and, conquering the languor and weakness he felt, he drew himself up, and with a calm and haughty air said to Caboccini:

"It is nothing; but think not I am ill, or near to death. No, no; I yielded not to cholera! Therefore I do not intend to die of joy on the first of June."

And truly the countenance of Rodin, although still ghastly pale, was lighted up by pride and exultation, till he seemed fully restored to himself.

So soon as he appeared perfectly recovered, a wonderful change came over Father Caboccini. The little, fat, pudgy, one-eyed man seemed suddenly transformed, and his fat, mirthful features took all at once an expression so firm, stern, and commanding, that Rodin involuntarily drew back, as he gazed on him with mute surprise.

Father Caboccini then, drawing from his pocket a paper, which he respectfully kissed, bestowed a look of extreme severity on Rodin, and, in a deep and threatening voice, read aloud as follows:

"Upon receipt of these presents, the Reverend Father Rodin shall resign all authority with which he may be invested into the hands of Father Caboccini, who will, with the Reverend Father d'Aigrigny, be alone authorised to receive and take charge of the Rennepont inheritance, should our holy Order have restored to it the treasures of which it was formerly deprived.

"And, further, upon receipt of this our pleasure, the Reverend Father Rodin shall be constantly watched by one of our reverend fathers, according to the selection of Father Caboccini, and conducted to our establishment in the city of Laval, where, confined to his cell, he shall be

kept in retreat and sequestration until our further will shall be made known."

Here Father Caboccini extended the document to Rodin, that he might perceive the signature of the general of the Company.

Samuel, deeply interested in this scene, left the casket half open while he drew nearer to the scene of action.

All at once Rodin burst into such a fit of wild, exulting laughter as defies description.

Father Caboccini beheld him with angry surprise, when Rodin, drawing himself up to more than his usual height, and resuming an expression more imperious, haughty, and overwhelmingly disdainful than ever, rejected with the back of his coarse, discoloured hand the paper offered to him by Father Caboccini, saying:

"What is the date of this document?"

"The fourteenth May," replied the astonished Caboccini.

"Well, then, here is a brief I received during the past night from Rome dated the eighteenth, which informs me I am named general of the Order. Read, if you will!"

Father Caboccini took the paper, perused it, and seemed thunderstruck with its contents; then, returning it to Rodin, he bent his knee before him in token of respectful submission.

And thus was Rodin's first ambitious aim attained. Spite of the suspicions, dislikes, and aversions he had excited in the party of which Cardinal Malipieri was the representative and head, Rodin, by means of skill, address, cunning, and persuasion, but principally from the high opinion entertained by his partisans at Rome of his singular capacity, had contrived, thanks to the active intrigues of his agents, to depose his general, and cause his own nomination to the vacant post. And Rodin calculated that, backed by the millions he was upon the

point of securing, the transition from this post to the pontifical throne was a mere step.

The silent spectator of this strange scene, Samuel, in his turn smiled, when, by means of a spring known to himself alone, he had secured the casket.

The metallic sound caused by the closing of the spring recalled Rodin from the most boundless flights of ambition to the sober realities of every-day life, and he observed to Samuel, in a sharp tone:

"You hear! to me — to me alone do these treasures belong!"

So saying, he extended his eager and impatient hands to grasp the casket of iron, as if he would hold possession of it even before the arrival of the magistrate.

But Samuel also exhibited a singular transformation of his usual appearance. Folding his arms on his breast, and drawing up his form bent by extreme age, he assumed a look at once imposing and menacing; his eyes sparkled with unwonted brightness, and appeared to dart forth fiery glances of wrathful indignation, as he exclaimed, in a deep, solemn voice:

"This fortune, originally the wreck of all possessed by one of the noblest of mankind, driven to self-destruction by the artifices and persecutions of the sons of Loyola, — this fortune, swelled even to an amount that would make a monarch happy to call his, thanks to the faithful guardianship of the three generations through whose hands this trust has passed, shall never be the reward of falsehood, hypocrisy, or murder! No, no, the Almighty, in his all-seeing justice, has willed it otherwise!"

"How dare you speak of murder?" asked Rodin, boldly.

Samuel replied not; but merely stamped his foot, and extended his arms slowly towards the lower end of the salon. And a fearful spectacle presented itself to the eyes of Rodin and Father Caboccini.

The draperies which concealed the walls were drawn

back, as though by some invisible hand; and ranged around a sort of crypt, lighted by the blue funereal rays of a silver lamp, were placed six corpses, extended upon black draperies, and clad in long black dresses: these bodies were those of

JACQUES RENNEPONT.
FRANÇOIS HARDY.
ROSE AND BLANCHE SIMON.
ADRIENNE AND DJALMA.

They appeared as if sleeping, their eyelids were gently closed, and their hands folded across their bosoms.

Trembling in every limb, Father Caboccini made the sign of the cross; then, retreating to the utmost limits of the apartment, he supported himself against the wall, while he covered his face closely with his hands.

Rodin, on the contrary, as though under some irresistible attraction, drew nigh, with glaring eyes, distorted features, and hair that stood on end, to behold more closely these senseless and inanimate remains of beings who might still have been living and happy but for him.

It might have been supposed that these unfortunate descendants of Marius Rennepont had just given up their breath, so calm and peaceful seemed their slumber.[1]

"Behold your victims!" cried Samuel, in a voice broken by sobs. "Yes, they have been sacrificed to your vile machinations, their death was necessary to the furtherance of your base desires; but, each time that one of the ill-fated members of this unfortunate race fell beneath your fiendish devices, I contrived to obtain possession of the remains, which received from me every pious care love or duty could suggest, for it was appointed me to see they all reposed in the same sepulchre. Oh,

[1] Should this picture be considered overdrawn, we must beg of the reader to recollect the surprising discoveries and improvements made in the art of embalming, and among others those brought to light by Doctor Gannal. — E. S.

cursed — thrice accursed man! Though you have thus rent them from life, you have no power over their cold, inanimate forms, — your murderous hands dare not molest their pale corpses!"

Still drawn on by an irresistible inclination, Rodin had by degrees approached close to the funereal couch of Djalma, when, desirous of satisfying himself he was not the sport of some horrible vision, the Jesuit ventured to touch the hands of the Indian which were folded across his bosom; though icy cold, the skin was soft and moist. Rodin shrunk back with horror, and for several seconds a convulsive spasm seemed to rack his frame; but the first shock over, reflection came to his aid, and with it that unconquerable, unflinching energy, that stubborn perseverance in his most diabolical schemes, which had raised him so high in the opinion of his confederates. Recovering his self-possession, then, he boldly planted himself in a stern attitude of defiance, passed his hand across his brow, drew up his head, and several times moistened his lips so as to be capable of articulating; for he felt the burning dryness and scorching of his mouth, throat, and chest momentarily increase, without being able to divine the cause of the devouring fire by which he was consumed. But he at length succeeded in giving to his excited features an ironical and imperious expression, as turning towards Samuel, who was weeping silently and bitterly, he said, in a harsh, guttural voice:

"We have no need of witnesses to prove the deaths of the various heirs, for here they all are very obligingly to spare us any trouble by attesting their own decease;" then, extending his bony hand, he pointed derisively to the six bodies.

At these words from the lips of his general, Father Caboccini again made the sign of the cross, as though in presence of a fiend.

"Father of Mercies!" said Samuel, "have you then

utterly forsaken this man? With what a fiendish glare he contemplates his victims!"

"Now, sir," observed Rodin, with a horrible smile, "when you consider that we have been kept gazing sufficiently long on your collection of natural curiosities, perhaps you will have the goodness to proceed to business. What might have been your motive in favouring us with this display, I know not; but if your friends here have come to their deaths by unlawful means, at least my calmness must convince you that I was in no manner concerned in the malpractices you so unceremoniously allude to. But this is all idle talk. I must insist upon a conclusion to the present affair, as I have an appointment at my own house at two o'clock. Reach down the casket!" And thus speaking, Rodin advanced towards the console on which it was placed.

Struck with indignation, wrath, and horror at the effrontery and hardihood of Rodin, Samuel quickly stepped before him, and, forcibly pressing on a small knob placed in the centre of the lid of the casket, and which yielded to his pressure, he cried out:

"Since your diabolical spirit cannot be touched by remorse, let us see whether it will remain equally inaccessible to the cry of baffled covetousness and defeated cupidity."

"What says he?" exclaimed Rodin. "And what is he about to do?"

"Behold!" said Samuel, smiling in his turn a smile of exultation. "I told you that, though you had hunted your victims to their graves, you should not have their spoils, — that the object of your wicked desires would yet escape your blood-stained hands."

Scarcely had Samuel finished speaking than small flames issued through the open-worked sides of the iron casket, while a slight odour, as of burning paper, diffused itself throughout the room. Rodin comprehended all.

"It is on fire!" exclaimed he, precipitating himself

on the casket to carry it off; but the object of so many crimes, so many nefarious schemes, yielded not to his hand; it was firmly riveted to the solid marble console.

"You are right," said Samuel, with a grim smile of triumph, "it is on fire, and past your power to extinguish; and, ere many minutes have elapsed, a few smouldering ashes will alone remain of all this truly regal treasure, and far better it were a heap of ashes than to pass unto you or yours. These riches are not mine; but the right to destroy them for ever has been formally and legally given me; for Gabriel de Rennepont will be faithful to the oath he has taken."

"Help, help! fire! water!" screamed Rodin, throwing himself on the casket, which he covered with his body, while he vainly strove to extinguish the flame which, kept alive by the current of air, streamed forth in bright jets from the numberless openings in the iron work; then its intensity gradually diminishing, a few slender wreaths of blue curling smoke escaped from the box, and then all was extinct. The deed was accomplished!

Then Rodin, breathless and exhausted, turned around, and, leaning one hand on the console, with the other struck his temples with despairing anguish; while, for the first time in his life, large bitter tears of baffled rage and fury streamed down his sunken and cadaverous cheeks.

Suddenly the most acute pains shot through his frame — they had been gradually increasing for some time past, though he had exerted himself to the utmost to subdue them. The mortal agony he endured at length burst through all restraint, and in the paroxysm by which he was attacked he was compelled to sink upon his knees, for his limbs were unequal to support him; and, pressing his hands convulsively to his bosom, he exclaimed, while endeavouring to force a smile:

"'Tis nothing; therefore do not rejoice too much —

merely a passing spasm; the treasure is destroyed, 'tis true; but I still — remain head of the Order — and — I — Oh, what torture do I suffer! I am parching as though in a furnace," continued he, writhing and twisting in agony, "from the moment of my entering this accursed house I have felt — I know — not what. If it were not that I have so — long — lived on roots — and bread — drinking only water — all of which — I have — purchased — myself, I should — fancy — I had — been — poisoned — for Cardinal — Malipieri — is crafty — as dangerous. Yes — yes — I still triumph. I cannot, will not — die — any more now than I did when seized upon by cholera. No! I say — I defy death — to — touch — me — amid — my — success — my — triumphant — great — ness."

Then, with a convulsive start and stiffening limbs, he exclaimed:

"Surely some fire devours my vitals; 'tis too, too true, I have swallowed poison. But by whom administered, and where?"

And, again interrupting himself, Rodin exclaimed, in a stifled voice:

"Help — oh, help! — why do you not come — to my assistance — instead of gazing on me — like spectres? Help, help — I say!"

Samuel and Father Caboccini, horror-struck at the sight of such fearful agony, had no power to move or stir.

"Help, I say!" repeated Rodin, in a strangulated voice; "for this poison is most deadly and tormenting in its effect; but how — could it — have — been — given — to me?"

Then with a wild scream of rage, as though a sudden thought had darted into his brain, he exclaimed:

"Ah! — this morning — Faringhea — the holy water — given by him — he so expert and skilful — in all subtle poisons. Yes — 'twas he did it — he had — had

— an interview with Malipieri. Oh, devil! demon! fiend! — well — have — you played your part. Oh, torture! — 'tis finished — I die! They will — regret me — the fools! — idiots! Oh, hell! thy torments — cannot exceed mine! No — no! — the church knows — not — all it loses in me! but I burn — I scorch — help me — save me!"

At this instant rapid steps were heard on the stairs, and in a few seconds Doctor Baleinier, followed by the Princesse de Saint-Dizier, appeared at the entrance of the chamber of mourning. The princess, having only that day heard vaguely of the death of D'Aigrigny, was hurrying to Rodin to learn the full particulars from him.

But when, abruptly entering the room, she had cast a glance around her, and beheld the frightful spectacle which presented itself, — the sight of Rodin convulsed in his last agonies, then, a little farther off, the six dead bodies lighted by the dim funereal lamp, and had recognised among them the remains of her niece as well as those of the two innocent girls sent by her advice to meet a certain death, — the princess remained transfixed with astonishment and horror. Her reason was unequal to so dreadful a shock. After slowly gazing around her, she raised her arms towards heaven and burst into a loud, wild laugh. The wretched woman was mad.

While Doctor Baleinier in deep distress supported the head of Rodin, who expired in his arms, Faringhea appeared at the door; and, standing in the shadow, he pointed to the corpse of Rodin, and exclaimed, with a ferocious glance:

"That man sought to become chief of the Company of Jesus only to destroy it. To me the Company of Jesus is dearer than Bohwanie. I have done, therefore, as the cardinal bade me."

EPILOGUE

CHAPTER XXXV.

FOUR YEARS AFTERWARDS.

FOUR years had passed away since the events last recorded, and Gabriel de Rennepont despatched the following epistle to the Abbé Joseph Charpentier, acting curate of the parish of St. Aubin, a small village in Sologne:

"FRESHWATER FARM, June 2, 1836.

"*My dear Joseph:* — With the intention of writing you a long letter, I had seated myself yesterday before the small, old-fashioned table of black wood you have so often admired. You recollect, do you not, that the window of my room looks into the farmyard, and that, while sitting at my writing, I can distinctly perceive all that passes there?

"I think I see you smile at this long introduction — have a little patience and I will tell you what I saw, and how it was that my attention became so diverted as to induce me to put off my letter till to-day.

"How I wished for you, my dear Joseph, to share with me the delightful spectacle that presented itself! and equally did I long for your artistical knowledge, that I might have transferred the charming scene to paper, through the medium of my pencil!

"The sun was just sinking behind the hills, the sky glittering with the light, fleecy clouds of vivid gold and purple, the soft, balmy air of spring came laden with fresh sweetness, as it passed over the thick, clustering

honeysuckle hedge, which, growing along the side of the little rivulet, forms one of the boundaries of the court below.

"Seated on a stone bench, beneath the great pear-tree, whose branches overspread the barn, was my adopted father Dagobert, — the brave and fine-hearted old soldier you so much admire. He seemed pensive, — his care-worn, wrinkled countenance was bent downwards, his head drooped upon his breast, as, with an abstracted air, he patted old Killjoy, who stood near his master, leaning his intelligent head on his knees. Beside Dagobert was his wife, my adopted mother, busily occupied in some kind of needlework, and close by them, on a low stool, sat Angèle, Agricola's young wife, nursing her infant, while the gentle-hearted Mayeux, holding the elder of Agricola's children on her knees, was engaged in teaching him his letters.

"Agricola had just returned from the fields, and was beginning to free his oxen from the yoke, when, no doubt, struck like me by the beauty of the picture before him, he stood for an instant gazing on it in mute admiration, his hand still leaning on the yoke, beneath which the pair of fine large black oxen bent their strong yet submissive heads.

"I cannot attempt to convey to you, my friend, an adequate idea of the extreme loveliness of the scene, gilded by the last rays of the setting sun, whose beams flickered and danced among the bright green leaves of our rich foliage.

"What different expressions were visible on the countenances of the various persons composing the interesting group! First, the venerable features of the old soldier; then the tender, maternal goodness evident in the physiognomy of my adopted mother; the sweet and blooming face of Angèle, as she gazed upon her child; the gentle sadness of La Mayeux, as she from time to time pressed her lips on the cherub cheeks of

Agricola's eldest born; and, last of all, Agricola himself, whose fine, manly features seemed the very mirror of the noble, generous spirit that dwelt within.

"Oh, my friend, when I contemplate this assemblage of beings — so good, so devoted, so truly attached and mutually dear — collected together in the retirement of a place like this, I lift up my heart to God with a feeling of gratitude too great for words to express. But this domestic peace, the pure calm evening, the perfume of the wild flowers and woods borne along by the evening breeze, the profound silence, interrupted only by the plashing of the small waterfall adjoining the farm, — all these calm delights lull the soul into a state of peace and good-will towards all men and ineffable love and thankfulness to the Great Giver of them, while our hearts seem to swell with an indescribable feeling of happiness too mighty for words to express.

"Can you not understand all this, my friend, — you who have so often dwelt upon the sweet yet melancholy pleasure which has elevated your feelings when wandering alone amidst your immense plains of briar roses, surrounded by dark forests of fir? Have you not felt your eyes become moist, without being able to explain why such should be the case? I have felt all this, and more: often and often during the delicious nights I have passed in utter loneliness amid the deep solitudes of America.

"But, alas! a painful interruption caused a temporary cloud to fall over the charming picture I have endeavoured to sketch for you. All at once I heard Dagobert's wife exclaim:

"'Dear husband, you are weeping!'

"At these words Agricola, Angèle, and La Mayeux rose, and eagerly crowded around the old soldier, while their countenances expressed the most tender solicitude; then as the soldier raised his head, two large, round tears might be distinctly seen coursing each other down his

weather-beaten cheeks, till they fell on his gray moustache.

"'Do not be uneasy, my children,' said he, in a voice of deep emotiou, 'tis nothing; but I could not help sorrowing as I remembered that it is exactly four years ago since that first of June.'

"He could not proceed, and, as he lifted his hands upwards for the purpose of drying his eyes, those around him, as well as myself, could observe that he held in his fingers a small bronze chain, to which was suspended a medal. This was his most precious relic, and fell into his possession four years ago, when, almost dying of grief for the loss of those two angelic creatures of whom I have so often talked to you, my friend, he found it around the neck of Maréchal Simon, when he was brought home dead after a desperate encounter, the despairing father having placed around his own neck the medal so long worn by his beloved children.

"I instantly quitted my room, as you may suppose, in order to lend my aid in endeavouring to calm the distress and soften the painful recollections of this excellent man. By degrees we succeeded in restoring him to tranquillity, and the rest of the evening passed away calmly and piously.

"You can scarcely believe how vividly this little incident recalled to my mind the late distressing scenes that have occurred to my ill-fated family, and how deeply, after I was again in the solitude of my chamber, I pondered over those events, from which I turn with fear and horror. My imagination seemed to call up the interesting victims of those fearful and mysterious circumstances, the frightful extent of which can never be known, owing to the deaths of Fathers d'Aigrigny and Rodin, and the incurable madness of Madame de Saint-Dizier, the three authors, or, at least, principal actors, in so many horrible calamities — calamities never to be repaired — for those who have thus been sacrificed to an insatiable

ambition would have been the pride and honour of mankind by their extensive benevolence and good works.

"Ah, my friend, had you but known, as I did, the real value of those noble hearts now for ever cold, or the splendid projects of universal charity meditated by the young and lovely lady, whose mind was formed of none but the finer and more superior elements that constitute a generous spirit, an enlightened understanding, and a soul all greatness, magnanimity, and the purest truth! The evening of her melancholy death, after a long conversation with her on a subject (which must be a matter of secrecy even from you), as if by way of preliminary to the magnificent designs she contemplated, she confided to my charge a considerable sum of money, saying, with her usual grace and sweetness of manner, 'My enemies are endeavouring to ruin me, 'tis even possible they may succeed. What I now give you will, at least, be safe in your hands, and may be useful to those who are in trouble, need, or sickness; to such give largely, give freely; dispense wherever and whenever the opportunity presents itself. I would fain make all the world partakers in my own inexpressible joy and content.'

"I forget whether I ever told you, my friend, that, after the fatal occurrences which followed each other with such fearful rapidity, perceiving Dagobert and his wife (my adopted mother) reduced to want, the gentle and amiable Mayeux unable to support herself upon her slender earnings, Agricola expecting to become a father, and myself deprived by my bishop of my humble curacy, and placed under an interdict, for having given religious consolation to a Protestant and performed the funeral rites over the body of an unfortunate creature whom despair had driven to suicide, — finding myself without resources of any kind, for the profession I follow admits not of my seeking the every-day means of gaining a livelihood, I scarcely recollect whether I ever told you that, after the death of Mlle. de Cardoville, I considered

myself at liberty to employ a small portion of the money entrusted to me by her for the aid of the unfortunate in purchasing this small farm in Dagobert's name. Yes, my friend, you have now the true history of the origin of my fortune, concerning which so many different rumours have been spread.

"The farmer of whom we bought our few acres of land began our agricultural education; our own desire to learn, aided by the perusal of several clever and practical works, completed it. Agricola is a first-rate farmer, and I have done my best to imitate him, without considering it in any manner derogatory to my sacred calling; for the toil which furnishes bread to the hungry is thrice blessed of the Lord, and it is merely showing forth the praise and glory of the all-bountiful Giver of good to till and cultivate the earth his hand created.

"Dagobert, his first bitter grief a little calmed, soon regained his health and vigour amid the simple, quiet life we lead; he had practised many agricultural arts in Siberia, therefore he became of first-rate value and importance in our little colony.

"My adopted mother, Agricola's excellent wife, and La Mayeux divide the domestic duties between them, and I gratefully acknowledge that the Almighty's blessing has visited our humble dwelling; and the united group of careworn creatures, whose hearts have been so severely chastened, now assemble in peace, feel content beneath one roof, thankfully exchange their past hard trials for the calm solitude of a country life, and gladly devote themselves to the rude labours of the field in return for an innocent, peaceful, and tranquil mode of existence.

"Yourself, my friend, have had opportunities of witnessing and admiring during our long winter evenings the fine and delicate mind of the gentle Mayeux, the uncommon power of understanding and first-rate poetical talent possessed by Agricola, the devoted maternal

affection of his mother, the strong, plain sense of his father, with the sweet cheerfulness and winning kindness of Angèle. You, then, can fully agree with me in asserting that it would be impossible to form a more delightful society, or one more anxious to contribute to each other's happiness. How many long winter evenings have we not passed together, assembled around a fire of crackling fagots, reading aloud by turns, or commenting on the contents of those inspired chapters, always new, imperishable, and divine, that warm the heart and expand and elevate the soul. What interesting discussions have we not pursued till the advance of night compelled us unwillingly to separate; then, upon other occasions, there was the treat of listening to the effusions of Agricola's pastoral muse, or the timid literary contributions of La Mayeux, varied by the union of the clear, sweet voice of Angèle with the rich manly tones of Agricola, as they sung together some simple national melody. Sometimes Dagobert would recite to us, in his plain, unpretending way, the scenes he had witnessed and been engaged in in other lands, relate his bygone exploits, till his eye would kindle and his manner resume its former energy. To wind up this catalogue of rural delights, fancy the merry laugh of the happy, healthful children, as they sported with the good old dog Killjoy, who permitted his little playfellows to do with him as they would, seeming conscious that he could not with safety return their innocent and loving attacks.

"'Intelligent creature!' would Dagobert exclaim, as he watched every turn of his old and faithful companion's countenance; 'he seems, however happy, as though continually looking for and expecting somebody!'

"Yes, the sagacious animal has never forgotten those two pure angels, whose guard and escort he was so many years; time seems not to diminish his regrets, — he seems, as Dagobert expresses it, 'to be always looking for some one.' Think not that our own enjoyment has rendered

us forgetful, far from it. Not a day passes on which those names dearest to our hearts are not tenderly and piously uttered; and the sad recollections they recall, incessantly hovering around us, give to our calm and peaceful existence that shade of gentle seriousness which so much struck you.

"Doubtless, my friend, this mode of life, restricted as it is to our immediate family circle, and extending not abroad for the relief and well-being of our fellow creatures, is somewhat egotistical. But, alas! our means are as limited as our sphere of action; and although the poor and needy ever find a place beside our frugal table, and a shelter beneath our roof, we are compelled to abandon all idea of doing good upon an enlarged scale, the trifling produce of our little farm barely sufficing for our own wants.

"Yet painful as these reflections are, I still cannot blame myself for the resolution I formed to keep the oath I voluntarily took — sacred and irrevocable — for ever to renounce the immense wealth to which, by the death of the other descendants of the family, I became sole heir. And I consider myself as having discharged a great and imperative duty in directing the person in whose hands the riches were deposited to reduce them to ashes sooner than to allow of their falling into the possession of persons who would have made so vile a use of them, or of perjuring myself by rescinding a donation made freely, seriously, and voluntarily by me.

"And yet, when I consider the realisation of the magnificent designs of my predecessor, designs only practicable with immense resources, but which Mlle. de Cardoville, ere the late fatal events transpired, had fully purposed carrying out, in concert with M. François Hardy, Prince Djalma, Maréchal Simon, his daughters, and myself, — when I think of the splendid focus of living strength which such an association would have displayed, and consider the prodigious influence its

emanations and radiations might have had on the whole civilised world, my indignant horror, my hatred, both as a man and a Christian, increase still more against the vile company whose black and nefarious schemes have crushed the germ of so great, so admirable, and so prolific a prospect of universal good.

"And what remains of projects so ably devised and so splendidly provided for? Seven tombs alone bear witness of the frustration of one of the noblest designs that ever graced the heart of man. Yes, my friend, seven tombs, — for mine, too, is prepared in the mausoleum, built, under Samuel's direction, on the site of the house in the Rue Neuve St. François, and of which he has constituted himself the keeper, faithful even to the last.

"I had proceeded thus far with my letter, my friend, when yours arrived.

"It appears, then, that, not satisfied with forbidding you to see me, your bishop now prohibits your future correspondence with me. Your regrets, expressive of so much sorrow and distress, at this fresh injunction, have deeply affected me. How many times have we conversed together touching ecclesiastical discipline, and the absolute power possessed by bishops over poor humble individuals like ourselves, left wholly to their mercy, without help or appeal!

"All this is very — very painful, and not a little hard to bear; but still it is the law of that church whose laws you, my friend, as well as myself, have vowed to observe and obey. You must, therefore, imitate my submission. To a man of honour a promise, let alone an oath, is too sacred to be tampered with or broken.

"I only wish, my dear and worthy Joseph, that you possessed the same delightful consolations I have found to console me in my disgrace and retirement. But I must not proceed, I feel I cannot write with the calm-

ness I should; and I know too well, by my own heart, what you suffer, to desire to increase your unhappiness.

"I must conclude this letter. Were I to write more, I should, perhaps, express myself in an unbecoming way towards those whose commands we are bound to respect.

"Then, since it must be so, I address you for the last time. Adieu, adieu, most affectionately and tenderly I bid you, my beloved friend, farewell for ever. My heart seems broken — crushed!

"GABRIEL DE RENNEPONT."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

PARDON.

THE day was just about to break. A pale and almost imperceptible pink light was beginning to appear in the East; but the stars were still shining with brightness in the midst of the azure of the sky. The birds, awaking in the fresh foliage of the large woods of the valley, began to warble the matin song. A light white vapour was arising from the high grass, bathed with the dews of night, whilst the calm and limpid waters of the great lake reflected the gray dawn in its deep blue mirror. All bespoke one of those joyous and warm days at the commencement of summer.

On one side of the valley, and facing towards the east, was a tuft of old hoar willows, hollowed out by time, and, with their rugged bark, concealed by the climbing branches of wild honeysuckle and creepers of all colours. These aged willows formed a sort of natural shelter, and beneath these gnarled and vast roots, covered with thick moss, a man and woman were seated. Their hair was perfectly white, and their deep wrinkles and bent backs bespoke extreme old age. Yet this woman had very lately been young and handsome, and long black tresses had covered her pale brow. And yet this man, too, had very lately been in the vigour of his age.

From the spot where this man and this woman were reposing, the valley, the lake, the woods, and, above the woods, the lofty and abrupt summit of a blue-topped

mountain, behind which the sun was rising, were all visible. This tableau, half concealed by the pale transparency of the early hour, was at once smiling, melancholy, and solemn.

"Oh, my sister!" said the old man to the woman, who, like himself, was reposing in the rural retreat formed by the *bosquet* of willows. "Oh my sister, how many times, for how many ages, since the hand of the Lord thrust us into space and separated, we have traversed the world from pole to pole! How many times have we been present at the waking of nature with feelings of incurable grief! Alas! it was another day to wander in from sunrise to sunset — another day uselessly added to our days, of which it in vain increased the number since death perpetually fled us."

"But, oh, what bliss! For some time, my brother, the Lord, in his pity, has willed that for us, as well as his other creatures, each day shall bring us nearer to the tomb! Glory to him! Glory to him!"

"Glory to him! my sister; for since yesterday, when his will was worked in us, I feel that languor so indescribable, but which must be caused by the approaches of death."

"I am like you, my brother, and have also felt my strength fail me, and gradually weaken in a sweet exhaustion. No doubt the end of our life approaches. The anger of the Lord is appeased."

"Alas! my sister, no doubt the last member of my ill-fated race will, by his death, now near at hand, achieve my pardon; for the will of God is at length manifested. I shall be pardoned when the last of my race shall have disappeared from the earth. For him, holy amongst the most holy, was reserved the power of accomplishing my ransom — he who has done so much for his brethren."

"Ah, yes, my brother, he who has suffered so much; he who without complaining has emptied cups so bitter,

born crosses so heavy; he who, a minister of the Lord, has been the image of Christ on earth, — he will be the last instrument of this pardon."

"Yes; for I feel that at this hour, my sister, the last of my race, the exemplary victim of a slow persecution, is on the point of rendering up his angelic soul to God. Thus, even to the very end, I shall have been fatal to my race thus cursed. Lord, Lord, if thy clemency is great, thine anger has been great also!"

"Courage and hope, my brother; think that after expiation comes pardon, after pardon, reward. The Lord has smitten in you and in your posterity the artisan, rendered wicked by misfortune and injustice, when he said to you, 'Onwards, onwards, without cessation or repose; and your journeying shall be vain; and every evening, when throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer your end than you were in the morning, when you again began your eternal course.' Thus for ages pitiless men have said to the artisan, 'Work, work, work, without cessation or repose, and your labour, fruitful for all, shall be sterile for yourself; and every evening, when throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer the attainment of happiness and repose than you were on the preceding evening, when you returned from your daily labour. Your wages will suffice to keep you in an existence of grief, privation, and misery.'"

"Alas, alas! will it be always thus?"

"No, no, my brother, instead of weeping over those of your race, rejoice over them; for if the Lord has required their death for your pardon, the Lord, redeeming in you the artisan accursed by Heaven, will also redeem, cursed and feared by those who bow him down beneath a yoke of iron. In truth, my brother, the time is at hand, the time is at hand! The mercy of the Lord will not be limited to us only. Yes, I tell you, in us are ransomed women and the slave of the day. The

trial has been cruel, brother; for eighteen centuries it has endured; but it has endured long enough. See, my brother, see in the east that rosy light which gradually reaches — reaches to the firmament. There will speedily arise the sun of a new emancipation, — an emancipation pacific, holy, great, salutary, productive, which will spread over the world its brightness and heat, vivifying even as the day-star, which will soon blaze resplendent in the heavens."

"Yes, yes, my sister, I feel this; your words are prophetic. Yes, we shall close our wearied eyes, having at least seen the aurora of the day of deliverance, — a day as splendid, glorious, as that which is about to arise. Ah, no, no; I have no longer any tears but those of pride and glorification for those of my race, who have died perchance to assure this redemption. Holy martyrs of humanity, sacrificed by the eternal enemies of humanity, — for the ancestry of these sacrilegious men, who blaspheme the holy name of Jesus in giving it to their Company, were the Pharisees, the false and unworthy priests, whom Christ has cursed. Yes, glory to the descendants of my race, for having been the last martyrs immolated by these accomplices in all slavery, all despotism — by these pitiless enemies of the freedom of those who would think, and would not suffer, — of those who would enjoy as sons of God the gifts which the Creator has shed upon the whole of his vast human family. Yes, yes, it is at hand, the end of the reign of those modern Pharisees, those false priests, who lend a sacrilegious support to the pitiable and pitiless selfishness of the strong against the weak, by daring to maintain, in the face of the inexhaustible treasures of the creation, that God has made man for tears, misfortune, and misery. These false priests, who, the favourers of all oppressions, desire always to bow to the very earth the forehead of the created being in humiliation, wretchedness, and ignorance. But, no, let

him boldly raise his head. God created man to be worthy, intelligent, free, and happy."

"Oh, my brother, your words are also prophetic. Yes, yes, the dawn of this glorious day approaches, — approaches as the rising of this day, which, by the mercy of God, will be the last of our terrestrial life."

"The last, my sister; for some indescribable weakness gains fast upon me; it seems as though all within me that is material is dissolving away, and I feel deep aspirations of my soul, which seems to long for heaven."

"My brother, my eyes are closing, and I can scarcely see through my half veiled lids the east with its dawn of rosy light."

"Sister, I can scarcely see the valley, the lake, the woods, through a dim vapour; my strength is leaving me."

"Brother, God be blessed, the moment of our eternal repose is at hand."

"Yes, it comes, sister; the happiness of eternal sleep seizes on all my senses."

"Oh, happiness, brother, I die."

"Sister, my eyes close — pardoned — pardoned."

"Yes, brother, and may this divine redemption extend over all — those who suffer — on earth."

"Die in peace, my sister — the dawn of this great day — is — near — the sun has arisen — behold it!"

"Oh, God be blessed!"

"Oh, God be blessed!"

And at the moment when these two voices ceased for ever, the sun shone forth in its dazzling radiance, and inundated the valley with its rays.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

CONCLUSION.

Our task is done — our work is ended. We well know how incomplete, imperfect, is this production. We know all that it wants in style, conception, and story. But we believe we have the right to say that this work is honest, conscientious, and sincere.

During the progress of the publication many hateful, unjust, and fierce attacks have assailed it; many severe and hard criticisms, many earnest but frank criticisms, have hailed it. The hateful, unjust, and fierce attacks have diverted us — we confess it in all humility — inasmuch as they have been directed against us from certain episcopal pulpits. These amusing displays of anger, these anathematising buffooneries, have been thundered forth against us for more than a year. They are too amusing to be disliked. It is simply the high comedy of clerical manners. We have enjoyed — very much enjoyed — this comedy. We have tasted and relished it; and it is right that we should express our sincere gratitude to those who, like the divine Molière, are both authors of and actors in it.

As to the violent, bitter critiques, we accept them freely and gratefully, as far as they relate to the literary portion of our work, and profit by the advice given to us, although, perhaps, somewhat sharply. Our humble deference to the opinion of the most judicious, and more correct than kind, of sympathising friends has, we fear, somewhat disconcerted and annoyed them; and this we

doubly regret, for we have profited by their criticism; and it is involuntary on our part if we displease those who have rendered us a service, although unintentional on their part.

A few words on other but graver attacks. We have been accused of having appealed to the passions, by marking out for public animadversion the members of the Company of Jesus. This is our answer: There is no longer any doubt — it is incontestable — it is demonstrated by texts submitted to evidence of the most opposite character, from Pascal to our days, that the theological works of the best accredited members of the Company of Jesus contain justification or excuse for —

THEFT — ADULTERY — VIOLATION — MURDER

It is also undeniable that foul and revolting works, signed by the reverend fathers of the Company of Jesus, have been more than once placed in the hands of the youth of their seminaries.

This last fact established, demonstrated by a scrupulous examination of texts, having been, besides, solemnly and lately exposed in an oration full of high feelings, reasoning, and serious and noble eloquence, by M. l'Avocat-Général Dupoty, during the proceedings of the learned and honourable M. Busch, of Strasbourg, what has been our proceeding? We have imagined members of the Company of Jesus, inspired by the detestable principles of their theologian classics, and acting according to the spirit and letter of these abominable works, their catechism and rudiments, — we have, in fact, put in action, in relief, in flesh and blood, these detestable doctrines, nothing more — nothing less.

Have we pretended that all the members of the Society of Jesus had the black art, the audacity, or the wickedness to employ those dangerous arms which are contained in the dark arsenal of their Order? By

no means. What we have attacked is the abominable spirit of the constitution of the Company of Jesus, the books of their classic theologians.

Is there any need to add that, since popes, kings, nations, and latterly France, have shown their disgust for the horrible doctrines of this Company by expelling its members or dissolving their congregation, we have done no more than present, under a new form, ideas, convictions, and facts, for a long while consecrated and of public notoriety?

This stated, we pass on to the next point.

We have been reproached, also, with exciting the hatred of the poor against the rich; of envenoming the envy which the unfortunate feels at the sight of the splendours of wealth.

To this we reply that we have, on the contrary, endeavoured, in the creation of Adrienne de Cardoville, to personify that portion of the aristocracy, by name and fortune, which, as much from a noble and generous impulse as by a knowledge of the past and forecast for the future, extends, or endeavours to extend, a benevolent and fraternal hand to all who suffer, to all who preserve their honesty in their distress, and to all that labour renders worthy. Is it, in a word, to sow the germs of division between the rich and poor when we exhibit Adrienne de Cardoville, the handsome and wealthy patrician, calling La Mayeux her sister, and treating her as a sister, when she is a poor, wretched, deformed sempstress?

Is it to irritate the workman against his employer, to show M. François Hardy laying the first foundation of a *maison commune?*

No; we have, on the contrary, endeavoured to effect a union, a reconciliation between the two classes placed at the two extremities of the social ladder, for during three years we have written these words, If the rich only knew!

CONCLUSION.

We have said, and we repeat, that there are frightful and innumerable miseries, against which the masses — better and better informed as to their rights, but still calm, patient, resigned — demand protection. They require that those who govern should at length occupy themselves with the amelioration of their deplorable position, each day aggravated by anarchy and the pitiless rivalry which prevail in commerce. Yes, we have said, and we repeat, that the honest and industrious workman has a right to a labour which shall give him adequate wages.

Let us sum up in a few lines the questions raised by us in this work.

We have endeavoured to prove the cruel deficiency of women's wages, and the horrible consequences of this deficiency.

We have demanded fresh securities against the facility with which any person may be shut up in a lunatic asylum.

We have demanded that the artisan should enjoy the benefit of the law with respect to liberty on payment of caution money, — caution reaching the amount of five hundred francs, a sum impossible for him to acquire, whilst liberty is more important to him than to any other person, as his family often lives on his sole industry, which he cannot exercise in gaol. We have, therefore, proposed the sum of sixty or eighty francs, as nearly representing the amount of a month's labour.

We have, in fine, by endeavouring to render practical the organisation of a *maison commune* for work-people, demonstrated (at least we hope so) the immense advantages, even at the present ratio of wages, insufficient as it is, work-people would find in the principle of association and living in common, if the means of achieving such a result were afforded them.

And in order that this might not be treated as a utopianism, we have established, by figures, that specu-

lators might do at the same time a humane and a generous action, profitable to all, and gain five per cent. for their money, by founding common houses.

A humane and generous speculation we have also recommended to the attention of the Municipal Council, always so full of solicitude for the Parisian population. The city of Paris is rich, and in no way could it dispose of some of its capital more advantageously than in establishing in some quarter of the capital a model *maison commune*. In the first place, the hope of being admitted there for a moderate sum would excite a praiseworthy emulation amongst the working classes; and in the next, they would draw from this example the first and most powerful rudiments of association.

Now one last word to thank, from the depths of our heart, the friends, known and unknown, whose benevolence, encouragement, and sympathy have constantly followed us, and have been to us of such powerful aid in our long task.

One other word, also, of respectful and unfailing gratitude for our friends in Belgium and Switzerland, who have deigned to give us public proofs of their sympathy, which will always be to us a source of satisfaction, and one of our sweetest rewards.

THE END.

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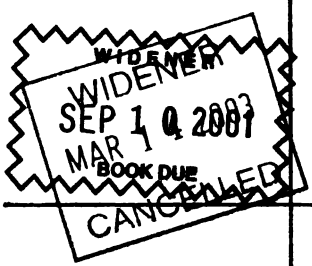

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